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**SITTING DAYS—2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 13, 14,15,16, 27, 28, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>8, 9, 10, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 29, 30, 31,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>1, 26, 27, 28, 29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Companion of the Order of Australia, Commander of the Royal Victorian Order

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Speaker—Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Steven Georganas MP

Members of the Speaker's Panel—Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams MP,
Mrs Yvette Maree D’Ath MP, Ms Sharon Joy Grierson MP,
Dr Andrew Keith Leigh MP, Ms Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP,
Mr Geoffrey Raymond Lyons MP, Mr Robert George Mitchell MP, Mr John Paul Murphy MP,
Mr Robert James Murray Oakeshott MP, Ms Deborah Mary O'Neill MP,
Ms Amanda Louise Rishworth MP, Mr Michael Stuart Symon MP,
Mr Kelvin John Thomson MP, Ms Maria Vanvakinou MP,
Mr Anthony Harold Curties Windsor MP

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Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Stephen Francis Smith MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

Party Leaders and Whips
Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. Julia Eileen Gillard MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Wayne Maxwell Swan MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP
Government Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Mr Ed Husic MP

Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Hon. Warren George Entsch MP
Opposition Whips—Mr Patrick Damien Secker MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

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## Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott, Hon. Anthony John</td>
<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams, Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry</td>
<td>Lyons, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albanese, Hon. Anthony Norman</td>
<td>Grayndler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Alexander, John Gilbert</td>
<td>Bennelong, NSW</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Hon. Kevin James</td>
<td>Menzies, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Andrews, Karen Lesley</td>
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<td>Baldwin, Hon. Robert Charles</td>
<td>Paterson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Bandt, Adam Paul</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>AG</td>
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<td>Billson, Hon. Bruce Fredrick</td>
<td>Dunkley, VIC</td>
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<td>Bird, Sharon Leah</td>
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<td>Mackellar, NSW</td>
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<td>McMahon, NSW</td>
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<td>Mayo, SA</td>
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<td>McMillan, VIC</td>
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<td>Brodtmann, Gai Marie</td>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Wright, QLD</td>
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<td>Watson, NSW</td>
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<td>Port Adelaide, SA</td>
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<td>Corangamite, VIC</td>
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<td>Chester, Darren</td>
<td>Gippsland, VIC</td>
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<td>Dawson, QLD</td>
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<td>Clare, Hon. Jason Dean</td>
<td>Blaxland, NSW</td>
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<td>Collins, Hon. Julie Maree</td>
<td>Franklin, TAS</td>
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<td>Combet, Hon. Greg Ivan, AM</td>
<td>Charlton, NSW</td>
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<td>Coulton, Mark Maclean</td>
<td>Parkes, NSW</td>
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<td>Crean, Hon. Simon Findlay</td>
<td>Hotham, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Crook, Anthony John</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
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<td>Danby, Michael David</td>
<td>Melbourne Ports, VIC</td>
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<td>D'Ath, Yvette Maree</td>
<td>Petrie, QLD</td>
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<td>Dreyfus, Hon. Mark Alfred, QC</td>
<td>Isaacs, VIC</td>
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<td>Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig</td>
<td>Dickson, QLD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine</td>
<td>Richmond, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ellis, Hon. Katherine Margaret</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emerson, Hon. Craig Anthony</td>
<td>Rankin, QLD</td>
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<td>Leichhardt, QLD</td>
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<td>Werriwa, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Ferguson, Hon. Martin John, AM</td>
<td>Batman, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Fitzgibbon, Hon. Joel Andrew</td>
<td>Hunter, NSW</td>
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<td>Fletcher, Paul William</td>
<td>Bradfield, NSW</td>
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<td>Forrest, John Alexander</td>
<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
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<td>Kooyong, VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
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<td>Gambaro, Hon. Teresa</td>
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<td>Kingsford Smith, NSW</td>
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<td>Gash, Joanna</td>
<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
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<td>Georganas, Steve</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
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<td>Gibbons, Stephen William</td>
<td>Bendigo, VIC</td>
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<td>Gillard, Hon. Julia Eileen</td>
<td>Lalor, VIC</td>
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<td>Gray, Hon. Gary, AO</td>
<td>Brand, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bruce, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Griggs, Natasha Louise</td>
<td>Solomon, NT</td>
<td>CLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haase, Barry Wayne</td>
<td>Durack, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Jill</td>
<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartsuyker, Luke</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke, Alexander George</td>
<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, Christopher Patrick</td>
<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey, Hon. Joseph Benedict</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew</td>
<td>Flinders, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husic, Edham Nurreddin</td>
<td>Chifley, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irons, Stephen James</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jenkins, Harry Alfred</td>
<td>Scullin, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen, Dennis Geoffrey</td>
<td>Tangle, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Stephen Patrick</td>
<td>Throsby, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Ewen Thomas</td>
<td>Herbert, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katter, Hon. Robert Carl</td>
<td>Kennedy, QLD</td>
<td>Ind</td>
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<td>Keenan, Michael Fayat</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Kelly, Hon. Michael Joseph, AM</td>
<td>Eden-Monaro, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kelly, Craig</td>
<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>King, Hon. Catherine Fiona</td>
<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laming, Andrew Charles</td>
<td>Bowman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh, Andrew Keith</td>
<td>Fraser, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ley, Hon. Susan Penelope</td>
<td>Farrer, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Livermore, Kirsten Fiona</td>
<td>Capricornia, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyons, Geoffrey Raymond</td>
<td>Bass, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Barton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macfarlane, Hon. Ian Elgin</td>
<td>Groom, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Jagajaga, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Forrest, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Markus, Louise Elizabeth</td>
<td>Macquarie, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Corio, VIC</td>
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<td>Macarthur, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Nats</td>
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<td>Melham, Daryl</td>
<td>Banks, NSW</td>
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<td>McEwen, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Cook, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moylan, Hon. Judith Eleanor</td>
<td>Pearce, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Murphy, Hon. John Paul</td>
<td>Reid, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neumann, Shayne Kenneth</td>
<td>Blair, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oakeshott, Robert James Murray</td>
<td>Lyne, NSW</td>
<td>Ind</td>
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<td>O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick</td>
<td>Gorton, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Dowd, Kenneth Desmond</td>
<td>Flynn, QLD</td>
<td>Nats</td>
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<td>Higgins, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>O'Neil, Deborah Mary</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owens, Julie Ann</td>
<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parke, Melissa</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrett, Graham Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice, Jane</td>
<td>Ryan, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice</td>
<td>Sturt, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, Rowan Eric</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall, Don James</td>
<td>Canning, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Oxley, QLD</td>
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<td>Kingston, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Fadden, QLD</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
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<td>Longman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Rudd, Hon. Kevin Michael</td>
<td>Griffith, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruddock, Hon. Philip Maxwell</td>
<td>Berowra, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Saffin, Janelle Anne</td>
<td>Page, NSW</td>
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<td>Schultz, Albert John</td>
<td>Hume, NSW</td>
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<td>Maranoa, QLD</td>
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<td>Fisher, QLD</td>
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<td>Perth, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Boothby, SA</td>
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<td>Turnbull, Hon. Malcolm Bligh</td>
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<td>LP</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Van Manen, Albertus Johannes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
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<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
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<td>Washer, Malcolm James</td>
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<td>Wilkie, Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
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<td>Windsor, Anthony Harold Curties</td>
<td>New England, NSW</td>
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<td>Wyatt, Kenneth George</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Tony</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; LNP—Liberal National Party; CLP—Country Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals; NWA—The Nationals WA; Ind—Independent; AG—Australian Greens

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

- Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
- Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright
- Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
## GILLARD MINISTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julia Gillard MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Digital Productivity</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Asian Century Policy</td>
<td>The Hon Dr Craig Emerson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Social Inclusion</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Minister for the Public Service and Integrity</td>
<td>The Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Wayne Swan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon David Bradbury MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Chris Evans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry and Innovation</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Greg Combet AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Minister Assisting for Industry and Innovation</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kate Lundy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parliamentary Secretary for Higher Education and Skills</td>
<td>The Hon Sharon Bird MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Simon Crean MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Simon Crean MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Sport</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kate Lundy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Stephen Smith MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence Materiel</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence Science and Personnel</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Dr Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon David Feeney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Multicultural Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kate Lundy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
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<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Catherine King MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Nicola Roxon MP</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Minister for Emergency Management</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Nicola Roxon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Minister Assisting on Queensland Floods Recovery</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Home Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Justice</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Disability Reform</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Housing</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Homelessness</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Community Services</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Status of Women</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Bob Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade and Competitiveness</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Dr Craig Emerson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for Trade</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Justine Elliot MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (Vice-President of the Executive Council)</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Minister of State</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting for Deregulation</strong></td>
<td>The Hon David Bradbury MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Finance and Deregulation</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Early Childhood and Childcare</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment Participation</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Sid Sidebottom MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Resources and Energy</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Tourism</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Greg Combet AM MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Mental Health and Ageing</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Health</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Catherine King MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Human Services</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
### SHADOW MINISTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Shadow Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Tony Abbott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Senator Arthur Sinodinos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Trade</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Opposition)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance</td>
<td>The Hon Teresa Gambaro MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of The Nationals)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Regional Transport</td>
<td>Mr Darren Chester MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Participation</td>
<td>The Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection</td>
<td>Mr Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator Gary Humphries</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</td>
<td>Senator Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tax Reform</td>
<td>The Hon Tony Smith MP</td>
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<td>(Deputy Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Opposition Business in the House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Childcare and Early Childhood Learning</td>
<td>The Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Universities and Research</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Brett Mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Youth and Sport</td>
<td>Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Education</td>
<td>Senator Fiona Nash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Nationals)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Development and Employment</td>
<td>Senator Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Water</strong></td>
<td>Senator Barnaby Joyce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Nationals in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Bob Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern and Remote Australia</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Shadow Minister</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government</td>
<td>Mr Don Randall MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Murray-Darling Basin</td>
<td>Senator Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Finance, Deregulation and Debt Reduction</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td>The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for COAG (Chairman, Scrutiny of Government Waste Committee)</td>
<td>Senator Marise Payne (Mr Jamie Briggs MP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources</td>
<td>The Hon Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>The Hon Bob Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Senator the Hon David Johnston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel</td>
<td>Mr Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader of the Opposition on the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Materiel</td>
<td>Senator Gary Humphries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Defence Force and Defence Support</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communications and Broadband</td>
<td>The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Communications</td>
<td>Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Primary Healthcare</td>
<td>Dr Andrew Southcott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health Services and Indigenous Health</td>
<td>Dr Andrew Laming MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families, Housing and Human Services</td>
<td>The Hon Kevin Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Seniors</td>
<td>The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector</td>
<td>Senator Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing</td>
<td>Senator Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Supporting Families</td>
<td>Mr Jamie Briggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women</td>
<td>Senator Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Environment and Heritage</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment</td>
<td>Senator Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Productivity and Population</td>
<td>Mr Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
<td>The Hon Teresa Gambaro MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Settlement</td>
<td>Senator Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry and Science</td>
<td>Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation, Industry, and Science</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Shadow Minister</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food Security</strong></td>
<td>The Hon John Cobb MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Small Business, Competition Policy</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Bruce Billson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>and Consumer Affairs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Fair</strong></td>
<td>Senator Scott Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competition</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Contents

**MONDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2012**

**Chamber**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS**—

Private Members’ Motions—
Reference to Federation Chamber.......................................................... 13073

**PETITIONS**—

Falun Gong........................................................................................................ 13073
Australian Taxation System............................................................................. 13073
Islam.................................................................................................................. 13073
Christmas Island.............................................................................................. 13074
Parkinson’s Disease......................................................................................... 13074

**PETITIONS**—

Responses......................................................................................................... 13074
Petition: Human Trafficking........................................................................... 13075
Nationally Owned Bank.................................................................................... 13075
Aged-Care Funding.......................................................................................... 13076
Petition: CyberKnife Radiotherapy Treatment............................................... 13077
Abel Tasman..................................................................................................... 13077
Pacific Highway............................................................................................... 13078

**PETITIONS**—

Statements .................................................................................................... 13078

**DELEGATION REPORTS**—

Parliamentary Delegation to the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Indonesia............................................................... 13079

**COMMITTEES**—

Education and Employment Committee—
Report............................................................................................................... 13082
Report and Reference to Federation Chamber .............................................. 13085
Climate Change, Environment and the Arts Committee—
Report............................................................................................................... 13085
Report and Reference to Federation Chamber .............................................. 13088

**BILLS**—

Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Amendment (Cubbie Station) Bill 2012—
First Reading.................................................................................................... 13088
Fair Work Amendment (Tackling Job Insecurity) Bill 2012—
First Reading.................................................................................................... 13090

**PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS**—

Juvenile Diabetes ............................................................................................. 13093

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**—

Abuse in Defence ............................................................................................ 13105

**BILLS**—

Assent............................................................................................................. 13108
Social and Community Services Pay Equity Special Account Bill 2012........ 13108
Social and Community Services Pay Equity Special Account (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2012 ................................................................. 13108
Customs Amendment (Smuggled Tobacco) Bill 2012 ......................................................... 13108
Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Amendment Bill 2012 .................. 13108
National Portrait Gallery of Australia Bill 2012 ............................................................... 13108
National Portrait Gallery of Australia (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2012 ................................................................. 13108
Customs Amendment (Military End-Use) Bill 2011 ............................................................. 13108
Defence Trade Controls Bill 2011 ...................................................................................... 13108
Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Further 2012 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2012 ................................................................. 13108
Commonwealth Government Securities Legislation Amendment (Retail Trading) Bill 2012 .............................................................................. 13108
Higher Education Support Amendment (Maximum Payment Amounts and Other Measures) Bill 2012 .............................................................................. 13108
Water Amendment (Long-term Average Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment) Bill 2012 .............................................................................. 13108
COMMITTEES—
Gambling Reform Committee—
Reference ....................................................................................................................... 13108
Constitutional Recognition of Local Government Committee—
Membership .................................................................................................................... 13108
BILLS—
Returned from Senate ....................................................................................................... 13109
Higher Education Support Amendment (Maximum Payment Amounts and Other Measures) Bill 2012 .............................................................................. 13109
Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Further 2012 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2012 .............................................................................. 13109
Commonwealth Government Securities Legislation Amendment (Retail Trading) Bill 2012 .............................................................................. 13109
Appropriation (Implementation of the Report of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers) Bill (No. 1) 2012-2013 .................................................................................. 13109
Appropriation (Implementation of the Report of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers) Bill (No. 2) 2012-2013 .................................................................................. 13109
Illegal Logging Prohibition Bill 2012 .................................................................................. 13109
Federal Circuit Court of Australia Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 ............................. 13109
Water Amendment (Long-term Average Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment) Bill 2012 .............................................................................. 13109
Crimes Legislation Amendment (Serious Drugs, Identity Crime and Other Measures) Bill 2012 .................................................................................. 13109
Superannuation Laws Amendment (Capital Gains Tax Relief and Other Efficiency Measures) Bill 2012 .................................................................................. 13109
Superannuation Auditor Registration Imposition Bill 2012 ................................................ 13109
Tax Laws Amendment (Clean Building Managed Investment Trust) Bill 2012 .............. 13109
Tax Laws Amendment (2012 Measures No. 5) Bill 2012 .................................................. 13109
Corporations Legislation Amendment (Derivative Transactions) Bill 2012 .................... 13109
CONTENTS—continued

Personal Liability for Corporate Fault Reform Bill 2012 ........................................ 13109
Superannuation Legislation Amendment (New Zealand Arrangement) Bill 2012 .... 13109
Freedom of Information Amendment (Parliamentary Budget Office) Bill 2012 ....... 13109
Judicial Misbehaviour and Incapacity (Parliamentary Commissions) Bill 2012 ........ 13109
Courts Legislation Amendment (Judicial Complaints) Bill 2012 ............................ 13109
Access to Justice (Federal Jurisdiction) Amendment Bill 2011 ................................. 13109
National Health Security Amendment Bill 2012 ........................................................ 13109
Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Amendment Bill 2012 ............. 13109

COMMITTEES—
  Public Accounts and Audit Committee—
    Report ....................................................................................................................... 13109

DELEGATION REPORTS—
  Parliamentary Delegation to 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in
  Switzerland and Germany and Austria ....................................................................... 13111

COMMITTEES—
  Gambling Reform Committee—
    Report ..................................................................................................................... 13113
  Public Works Committee—
    Report ..................................................................................................................... 13117

BILLS—
  Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency
    Measures) Bill 2012—
    Second Reading ...................................................................................................... 13120

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
  Millennium Development Goals .................................................................................. 13133
  Premature Birth Awareness ........................................................................................ 13133
  Stenlake, Mr Tim ......................................................................................................... 13134
  Throsby Electorate: Nan Tien Temple ....................................................................... 13134
  Queensland Liberal National Party Senate Preselection ............................................. 13135
  Bass Electorate: Brooks High School ........................................................................ 13135
  Reeve, Mr Cliff ........................................................................................................... 13136
  ACT Walking for Pleasure ......................................................................................... 13136
  Electorate of Herbert: Schools ................................................................................... 13137
  Banks, Mr Gary AO .................................................................................................... 13137

BUSINESS—
  Days and Hours of Meeting ...................................................................................... 13137

CONDOLENCE—
  Riordan, Hon. Joseph Martin, AO ............................................................................ 13138
  Reference to Federation Chamber ....................................................................... 13140
  Courtenay, Mr Bryce, AM ...................................................................................... 13140
  Reference to Federation Chamber ........................................................................ 13140

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
  Prime Minister ......................................................................................................... 13140
  Economy ..................................................................................................................... 13141

CHAMBER
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS—continued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister ........................................................................................................... 13142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy ......................................................................................................................... 13143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister ............................................................................................................. 13145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Infrastructure ......................................................................................................... 13145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse ................................................................... 13146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister ............................................................................................................. 13147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray-Darling Basin ................................................................................................. 13148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISTINGUISHED VISITORS ......................................................................................... 13149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE— .................................................................................. 13149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister ............................................................................................................. 13150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade ......................................................................................................................... 13150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister ............................................................................................................. 13151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon Pricing ............................................................................................................. 13152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister ............................................................................................................. 13153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Australia ...................................................................................................... 13154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister ............................................................................................................. 13155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Disability Insurance Scheme ......................................................................... 13156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION— ....................................................................... 13156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oath or Affirmation of Allegiance .............................................................................. 13156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS— ............................................................................... 13156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit Report No. 10 of 2012-13 ................................................................................ 13156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOCUMENTS— ............................................................................................................. 13157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation ................................................................................................................. 13157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMITTEES— ............................................................................................................. 13157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional Recognition of Local Government Committee— ................................ 13157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership ............................................................................................................... 13157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Australia Committee— .................................................................................. 13157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership ............................................................................................................... 13157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BILLS— ......................................................................................................................... 13157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012— 13158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference to Federation Chamber ............................................................................. 13158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER— .............................................................................. 13158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions Without Notice ............................................................................................ 13158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS— .................................................................................... 13158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People-Trafficking ....................................................................................................... 13159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOCUMENTS— ............................................................................................................. 13162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-People Trafficking Interdepartmental Committee— Presentation ........................ 13162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMITTEES— ............................................................................................................. 13164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Joint Committee— Report ........................................ 13164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure Committee— Report ................................................................................... 13166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement Committee— Report ........................................................................ 13167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS—continued

BILLS—
Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012—
Second Reading................................................................. 13167
Migration Legislation Amendment (Student Visas) Bill 2012—
Consideration of Senate Message.................................................... 13174
Higher Education Support Amendment (Streamlining and Other Measures) Bill 2012—
Consideration of Senate Message.................................................... 13175

BILLS—
Superannuation Legislation Amendment (MySuper Core Provisions) Bill 2012—
Consideration of Senate Message.................................................... 13181
Fair Entitlements Guarantee Bill 2012—
Dental Benefits Amendment Bill 2012—
Returned from Senate...................................................................... 13184
Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012—
Second Reading............................................................................. 13184
Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012—
Second Reading............................................................................. 13188
Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012—
Report from Federation Chamber .................................................... 13213
Second Reading............................................................................. 13213

DELEGATION REPORTS—
Parliamentary Delegation to Solomon Islands and Samoa............................... 13223

BILLS—
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Making Marine Parks Accountable) Bill 2012 [No. 2]—
Second Reading............................................................................. 13224

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS—
State Public Sector Employees................................................................ 13237

ADJOURNMENT—
Sunland Group .............................................................................. 13246
Banks Electorate: Education............................................................. 13248
Stirling Electorate: 2012 Members of Parliament National Volunteer Awards........... 13249
New South Wales Government: Education............................................ 13250
Lebanon......................................................................................... 13252
Canberra Electorate: Volunteering...................................................... 13253
Volunteering.................................................................................. 13254
Bass Electorate: Innovation.............................................................. 13255
Cook Electorate: Cook Community Classic......................................... 13257
Queensland Government.................................................................. 13258
Gillard Government......................................................................... 13259

CHAMBER
CONTENTS—continued

Coal Seam Gas ........................................................................................................ 13261
NOTICES .................................................................................................................. 13262

Federation Chamber
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS—
  Swan Electorate: Health Services ........................................................................ 13266
  New South Wales Government ............................................................................. 13267
  Hasluck Electorate: Peppermint Dance Company .............................................. 13267
  Fawkes, Corporal Joseph Henry ............................................................................. 13268
  Bonner Electorate: Volunteers ............................................................................. 13269
  Hindmarsh Electorate: Remembrance Day ......................................................... 13270
  Forde Electorate .................................................................................................. 13271
  Fowler Electorate: Multiculturalism ..................................................................... 13272
  Solomon Electorate: Child Care .......................................................................... 13273
  Women in the Workforce ..................................................................................... 13273

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS—
  Queensland Recreational Fishing Programs ....................................................... 13274
  Viability of Rural Producers ................................................................................ 13290
  Battle of Eureka .................................................................................................... 13297
  World Hepatitis Day .............................................................................................. 13305

BILLS—
  Migration Amendment (Reform of Employer Sanctions) Bill 2012—
    Second Reading .................................................................................................. 13313
  Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures)
    Bill 2012—
    Second Reading ................................................................................................. 13331

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS—
  White Ribbon Day .................................................................................................. 13346
  National Critical Care and Trauma Centre .......................................................... 13362
  Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease ............................................................................... 13370
  Torres Strait: Health ............................................................................................... 13373

GRIEVANCE DEBAT—
  World Diabetes Day ............................................................................................... 13383
  Diabetes .................................................................................................................. 13385
  Energy Prices ........................................................................................................ 13385
  Labor Government ................................................................................................. 13387
  Beef Industry ......................................................................................................... 13390
  Small Business ..................................................................................................... 13392
  Moreton Electorate: Flyer ...................................................................................... 13395

Questions In Writing
  Finance and Deregulation: Staff Travel—(Question No. 1097) ........................... 13398
  Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1140) .......... 13398
  Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1141) .......... 13398
  Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1142) .......... 13399
  Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1143) .......... 13399
  Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1144) .......... 13400
  Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1145) .......... 13400
CONTENTS—continued

Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1146) ..................... 13401
Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1147) ..................... 13401
Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1148) ..................... 13401
Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1149) ..................... 13402
Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1150) ..................... 13402
Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1151) ..................... 13403
Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1152) ..................... 13403
Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio—(Question No. 1153) ..................... 13404
Monday, 26 November 2012

The SPEAKER (Ms Anna Burke) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Private Members' Motions

Reference to Federation Chamber

The SPEAKER (10:01): In accordance with standing order 41(g), and the recommendations of the Selection Committee, I present copies of the terms of motions for which notice has been given by the members for Capricornia, Forrest, Fraser, Brisbane, Fowler, Solomon, Throsby and Leichhardt. These items will be considered in the Federation Chamber later today.

PETITIONS

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (10:01): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petitions:

Falun Gong

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that Falun Gong is a peaceful meditation practice based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. Falun Gong practitioners in China have been subjected to the most brutal and relentless persecution by the Chinese Communist regime since July 1999, causing thousands to lose their lives from illegal detention and systematic torture. Such conduct stands in blatant violation to all international human rights charters that the Chinese government has itself ratified. According to investigative reports published by human rights lawyer David Matas and former Canadian Secretary of State for the Asia Pacific; David Kilgour, tens of thousands of imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners have been subjected to forced organ harvesting for China's transplant market and lost their lives (www.organharvestinvestigation.net).

We therefore ask the House to request the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister to openly and forthrightly call for an immediate end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

from 4,948 citizens

Australian Taxation System

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of a concerned citizen of Australia draws to the attention of the house:

In the 1950's and '60's, the tax system was arranged to attempt a continuous system of proportional tax along the whole range. To achieve this would have been an enormous project particularly if changes to levels of tax at changing levels of income were needed.

I have programmed a system on excel by which the changing of two figures, (1) of maximum tax per cent of income (65) or (2) amounts ($450,000), to be relevant on the personal tax system. I request that this tax system be adopted for future tax use, and, with the adoption of the use of the system for company tax, as below with the required changes, 55 or so in the place in C12, replacing the 65, and $3,500,000,000 or so to replace the $450,000 in C14. I have found this to be automatic and accurate over the whole range.

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<td>11</td>
<td>Tax Payable</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Per cent of Income</td>
<td>IF(C9&gt;=C14,D12%, (C9/C14)*D12%)</td>
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<td>14</td>
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from 1 citizen

Islam

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of certain citizens of Australia.

draws the attention of the House that Islam contradicts, opposes and divides the Australian
constitution, citizenship and allegiance. Islam complies to the meaning of sect, by surviving beneath the umbrella of political law, by being undemocratic, secular, intolerant, with fanatical, somewhat unGodly beliefs and specific untruths. All islamics, by nature are a warrior against democracy.

We therefore ask the House to, through legislation or referendum ban the sect Islam from Australia [as Japan has done].

from 1 citizen

Christmas Island

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of certain residents of the Territory of Christmas Island draws to the attention of the House:

That 63% of the Territory of Christmas Island is currently a National Park. The Commonwealth Department of Sustainability and Environment is seeking to introduce a Recovery Plan under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) over the whole Island. The scope of the proposed Recovery Plan is so broad that no further economic development activity will be possible on the Island on any land, irrespective of whether it is held by residents and corporations on freehold, leasehold or other tenures, without being in conflict with the Recovery Plan as it has been drafted. In accordance with the EPBC Act, once approved, the relevant Minister and the government have no discretion to approve any further development which may conflict with a Recovery Plan, irrespective of the social and economic benefits that would flow to the community from such developments.

We therefore ask the House to:

Direct the relevant Minister responsible for the Department to restrict the application of the proposed Recovery Plan outside the National Park to unallocated Crown Land that has not been designated for other purposes under the current Shire of Christmas Island Town Planning Scheme, Local Planning Strategy and the Crown Land Management Plan and exclude its operation from all land currently held by individuals and corporations by freehold, leasehold or other approved tenure.

from 293 citizens, 54 citizens and 61 citizens

Parkinson's Disease

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of concerned citizens, family members, carers of, and persons living with Parkinson's Disease in Australia

Draws to the attention of the House:

Over 64,000 Australians (one in 350) are living with Parkinson's Disease, the second most common neurological condition in Australia, a chronic, progressive, incurable, complex and disabling condition. The economic cost of the burden of the disease in 2011 was $8.3 billion (Deloitte Access Economics). Currently twenty-five people with Parkinson's are diagnosed every day and the number of people with Parkinson’s is expected to treble to approximately 240,000 by 2033. PD is not formally recognised as a chronic disease, yet over a lifetime, persons with Parkinson's are confronted with and experience greater disability than persons with conditions recognised as chronic (including cancer, diabetes, heart disease). A major challenge in reducing the burden of this disease, on the individual, carer and family, and ultimately the public purse, is the lack of government funding for research, treatment, awareness and education (of general public and also health services community), focused specifically on PD.

We therefore ask the House to ask the Government to provide funds for clinical research into a cure for Parkinson's, and the development of medication and treatment to improve the quality of life for all Australians with Parkinson's disease.

from 405 citizens

Petitions received.

PETITIONS

Responses

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (10:02): Ministerial responses to petitions previously
presented to the House have been received as follows:

Petition: Human Trafficking

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 23 August 2012 to the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Minister for Disability Reform, the Hon Jenny Macklin about a petition recently submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding compensation for survivors of human trafficking. Your letter was referred to me as support for trafficked people falls within my portfolio responsibilities. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs is responsible for administering the Support for Trafficked People Program (Support Program). The Support Program assists clients to meet their basic needs for safety, food, accommodation, mental and physical health and wellbeing through case management services provided by the Australian Red Cross.

As the service provider for the Support Program, the Red Cross provides a 24 hours a day, seven days a week, national response within all states and territories in Australia to urgently assist clients if required.

The Support Program is available to all victims of trafficking who meet the eligibility criteria, regardless of their gender, the purpose for which they were trafficked, their visa status and, initially, whether they are willing and/or able to assist with an investigation and prosecution. The Support Program will receive a total of $4.2 million in funding from 2011-12 to 2014-15.

As at 27 September 2012, a total of 199 clients have been referred to the Support Program since 2004. Currently, 61 clients are being supported on the Program. I am happy to provide more information on the Support Program if required.

I have referred your letter to the Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Management, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, as the issue of compensation falls within her portfolio responsibilities.

Thank you again for writing.

from the Minister for Community Services, Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development and Minister for the Status of Women, Ms Collins

Nationally Owned Bank

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 20 August 2012 regarding a petition submitted for consideration by the Standing Committee on Petitions requesting a new nationally owned bank to be established (reference 693/1124).

For many years, a government owned bank played a significant role in the financial sector, however the Government does not consider it appropriate for it to own or operate a bank or other financial institutions in the modern Australian economy.

A government-owned bank would provide similar services and products to those currently provided by the private sector and would not be in a position to provide better or cheaper services to customers than a private institution in a competitive environment.

The Government is of the view that strong competition in the financial services sector is critical to ensuring consumers get the services they want at the lowest possible prices.

That is why the Australian Government has taken action to promote a competitive and sustainable banking system. The Government introduced three broad streams of reform: to empower consumers to get a better deal; to help smaller lenders put more competitive pressure on the big banks; and to secure Australia’s financial system, to provide a sustainable flow of credit to households and businesses.

To empower consumers to get a better deal, the Government has introduced a new a new 'tick and flick' service so consumers can easily switch transaction accounts to another bank, building society or credit union. This new service removes the burden of having to change the details of automatic debit and credit transactions.

The Government also banned exit fees on home loans entered into after 1 July 2011 to reduce the
costs of switching to cheaper mortgage products. Borrowers can now also request a mandatory key fact sheet to enhance their capacity to compare the costs of different mortgage products when they shop around for home loans.

The Government has also passed legislation to help get a better deal for Australians with credit cards by giving consumers more control over the amount they borrow while stamping out lender practices that see them pay more interest than they should.

In addition to these measures, the Government has also empowered the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to prosecute anti-competitive price signalling, to prevent banks from engaging in behaviour designed to keep interest rates higher than they otherwise would be.

To support smaller lenders in putting competitive pressure on the big banks, and to secure critical deposit funding for smaller lenders, the Government has:

- confirmed the Financial Claims Scheme as a permanent feature of our financial system;
- increased its investment to support the securitisation market, which many of our smaller lenders rely on to make cheaper loans, by $4 billion; and
- launched a national community awareness and education campaign, to build understanding about the range of competitive deals available and empower consumers to shop around.

A competitive and sustainable banking system is central to the Government's broad economic agenda, and continues our record of strong and responsible economic management.


Thank you for bringing the content of the petition to my attention and trust that the attached information assists the House in responding.

Petition to the Honourable the Speaker and Member of the House of Representatives
This petition of Aged and Community Services Australia, draws to the attention of the House its deep concern regarding the Government's decision to reduce subsidies to care for people entering nursing homes from 1 July 2012.

This will reduce the level of funding for new residents and subsequently may lead to a reduction in the number of staff therefore impacting on the level of care provided. This is not in the best interests of one of the most vulnerable groups in our society — frail older Australians.

The Department of Health and Ageing is implementing the Government's directive to achieve savings in Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) subsidy payments for 2012-13 which will be in the order of $430 million. This is additional to the $50 million in 2012-13 announced in the 20 April Living Longer Living Better announcement.

As the representative body of the not-for-profit sector, our members provide services to the most vulnerable older people in our community. We therefore ask the House to reconsider this decision and determine in a more considered manner what is the real cost of caring for older Australians is through an independent cost of care study so that appropriate funding for care can be provided.

Response:
The Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) changes, announced on 21 June 2012, are intended to bring the future growth in funding back to the long-term trend rate and to redirect funding for other aged care reforms. They are not intended to reduce funding for residential aged care.
care subsidies. The Government has increased funding for residential care by $310 million to $9.1 billion in 2012-13, $496.4 million more than estimated in the 2011-12 Budget. Under these reforms, average care subsidies are projected to grow by 2.7% per annum (above indexation) between 2012-13 and 2016-17.

The changes to the ACFI have been informed by the deliberations of the ACFI Monitoring Group which met between December 2011 and March 2012. The Department of Health and Ageing has established a new ACFI Monitoring Group which will work closely with national peak bodies and aged care stakeholder groups to ensure the changes are implemented as intended and to identify whether there are any unintended outcomes so that they can be addressed. The ACFI Monitoring Group has met twice in Canberra on 10 August and 26 September 2012.

The Government is not planning to conduct a cost of care study at the present time. I support the view that sustainability of the aged care sector as a whole is best measured by looking at indicators of viability across the sector and modelling of influencing factors of viability of individual facilities.

Professor Len Gray in his independent Two Year Review of Aged Care Reforms completed in 2001 supported this approach. This approach is also in line with that adopted by Professor Hogan in his independent Review of Pricing Arrangements in Residential Aged Care, which was completed in 2004.

from the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Minister for Social Inclusion and Minister assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform, Mr Butler

Petition: CyberKnife Radiotherapy Treatment

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your representations of 19 September 2012 as Chair of Standing Committee on Petitions regarding a petition seeking an expedited Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) assessment for public funding of CyberKnife cancer treatment.

There is already a Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) general item (No. 15600) for patients receiving Stereotactic Radiosurgery (SRS). The delivery of SRS with CyberKnife can be claimed now under this item.

MSAC is considering an additional MBS item specifically for CyberKnife. This application (Application 1158) was considered by the Evaluation Sub-committee on 12 October 2012, the last step before the proposal may be considered by MSAC. As such, the assessment process is nearing its conclusion.

The assessment report summarising the clinical and economic evidence, and a Public Summary Document containing MSAC's advice and the rationale for that advice, will be published on the MSAC website. The MSAC website will continue to be updated to reflect the application's progress, and ultimate consideration for public funding by government. The website is at www.msac.gov.au.

Once again, thank you for writing.

from the Minister for Health, Ms Plibersek

Abel Tasman

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 10 September 2012 about the petition requesting the refusal of entry to Australian waters of the large mid-water trawl vessel the FV Abel Tasman, formerly the FV Margiris.

On 20 September 2012 the Minister for Environment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), with my agreement, imposed an interim declaration preventing the FV Abel Tasman and similar boats from operating in the Commonwealth Small Pelagic Fishery. The interim declaration prohibits commercial fishing activities by large mid-water freezer vessels in the Commonwealth Small Pelagic Fishery (declared commercial fishing activity) for a period of 60 days. Over the interim declaration period the minister is required to consult with persons about making a longer-term final declaration preventing the declared commercial fishing activity and allowing an expert panel to assess the potential environmental impacts of the activity.
from the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Ludwig

Pacific Highway

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter dated 17 September 2012 about a petition recently submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding funding to duplicate the Pacific Highway.

The Pacific Highway is a key component of the national land transport network. Completing the duplication will assist in increasing economic capacity and productivity along the Sydney-Brisbane corridor and, when completed, will reduce end-to-end travel times by approximately two and a half hours. It will also provide efficiency gains for both freight and passenger traffic and open up regions for increased tourism and industry.

That is why the Federal Labor Government has already committed an unprecedented $4.1 billion towards duplicating the Pacific Highway. In addition, the recent Federal Budget allocated an additional $3.56 billion if matched by the New South Wales Government.

This additional commitment has the potential to take the total Federal Government funding available for the Pacific Highway since commencement of the Nation Building Program in 2008-09 to more than $7.7 billion. This contrasts sharply with the $1.3 billion spent by the then Coalition Government over a 12 year period.

Right now, there are 1,800 people working up and down the Pacific Highway. Much of this work, such as the Kempsey Bypass, was 100 percent Federally-funded during the Economic Stimulus Plan to keep people in jobs during the downturn.

This is a record investment and provides assurance that the Federal Labor Government remains willing to deliver on its commitment to the Pacific Highway.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

from the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Mr Albanese

PETITIONS

Statements

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (10:03): As this is the last Petitions Committee statement I will make in 2012, today I will discuss the petitioning statistics of this calendar year. The statistics tell a story of consolidation of the House's petitioning processes. They reflect the effective dissemination of information to the public about the petitioning requirements and of the ease of presentation of compliant petitions. Importantly, these statistics tell a story of ongoing success in the way the House facilitates responses to petitions.

In 2012 there has been a slight increase in the percentage of petitions received that met the requirements of the House's standing orders; 69 per cent of petitions received in the calendar year were tabled, compared with 66 per cent in 2011. This appears to reflect the greater propensity of the public to seek out information about the petitioning process and thus prepare petitions that meet the House's requirements. This accords with the increasing number of prospective petitioners who are contacting the committee's secretariat to gather information about the process before they start signature collection.

The volume of petitions received and consequently tabled in the 2012 calendar year fell from 195 petitions in 2011 to 116 in 2012. Aligned with this drop in the number of petitions tabled was a decrease in the average signature count per petition. If we take out the one extremely large petition tabled in the 2011 calendar year—of over a quarter of a million signatures—the average signature count per petition still fell by around 39 per cent. This drop in signature count appears to reflect two main drivers. Firstly, fewer petitions were received in 2012 that were distributed through large organised
groups that have the capacity to circulate petitions widely and gather a great number of signatures. Instead, the committee received more petitions exclusively organised and distributed by individuals, who generally have a reduced capacity to physically gather a large volume of signatures. Also, because the matter is personally important to these individual petitioners, they balance the desire for a large show of support against the need to prepare a petition in a timely fashion. Secondly, there was a reduction in petitions being tabled that had the same terms as previously tabled petitions. In contrast, multiple petitioning was a feature of the 2011 year, often generated by issues that received considerable media attention. As such, the committee received more petitions in 2012 that were unique and varied in subject matter.

The highlight of these statistics, however, is the high ministerial response rate to petitions tabled. This is indeed a success story that has been raised on previous occasions since the inception of the committee in 2008, but this year's results were exceptional. Ninety-two per cent of petitions tabled this year received a ministerial response. This contrasts with the 2011 rate of 70 per cent, which was already a very good result considering that many petitions tabled in the spring sittings receive tabled responses in the following year, as would be expected for quite practical reasons.

Members continue to be directly engaged in the House's petitioning process. In addition to the petitions I have tabled in my capacity as chair of the committee, 22 per cent of the compliant petitions received in 2012 were presented by members. I also note that this sitting week has just started and that members may also present compliant petitions during opportunities for short speeches in the remainder of this final sitting week.

I conclude today by reinforcing the neutrality of the committee in terms of petitions' subject matter. The committee's role is to assess petitions against standing order requirements, in conjunction with the established practices of the House, and to provide a conduit for the tabling of compliant petitions. Committee members must leave behind their personal views and allegiances regarding the subject matter and requests of petitions. The committee determines whether a petition is compliant based only on the House's petitioning requirements. Naturally, this also extends to my role as the chair of the committee in tabling petitions in this time slot. In presenting these compliant petitions I am not endorsing their content or requests. I may personally agree with some of the petitions and vehemently disagree with others, but my personal views and those of the committee do not inform the outcome of a petition's status. Similarly, a member's involvement in presenting a petition need not be one of sponsorship but may merely be a facilitation role to enable a constituent's concerns to be put before the House.

Finally, I take this opportunity to extend to you, Madam Speaker, a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year. And to the Clerk and all the hardworking staff of the House of Representatives, the secretariat of my committee and indeed all members in this House: I wish you a happy and holy Christmas. Thank you.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Parliamentary Delegation to the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Indonesia

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (10:10): I present the delegation report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the People's
Republic of China and the Republic of Indonesia from 26 August to 7 September 2012. The delegation's report is a summary of the key issues covered during the visit to two of Australia's most important bilateral partners, China and Indonesia. The visit to China was part of the official parliamentary exchange agreement with the National People's Congress. It also coincided with the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, a far-sighted step that was taken by the Whitlam government as one of its first acts in 1972.

As I entered the National People's Congress in Beijing I was struck by the enormous historic significance of this event and I could only think of the great man himself, Gough Whitlam, as he walked up those very same steps 40 years ago. Nobody then could have imagined the changes to take place in China over the coming four decades. The relationship between Australia and China has developed way beyond the expectations of even the most optimistic commentator back in 1972.

The delegation first held bilateral discussions with members of the National People's Congress. The issues covered included agricultural cooperation, food security, food safety, investment and how to deal with an ageing population. The delegation proposed a number of mechanisms for deepening the connection between our two parliaments, including holding regular meetings between our delegations at IPU meetings and the greater use of video technology so that committees in both Australia and China can exchange views more often. The delegation also travelled to Kunming and Chengdu for further meetings and to meet with Australian businesses in China.

Throughout the visit, one of the clear concerns put to the delegation by Chinese business was a perception of unequal treatment when attempting to invest in Australia. The delegation was able to address specific cases as they were raised and we also made the point that Australia has a non-discriminatory investment regime. But the point remains that there is disquiet in China at the political and business level, with perceptions about Australian unease with Chinese investment.

In Indonesia, the delegation visited Jakarta, Bogor and West Sumatra. Our discussions in the Indonesian National Assembly with the Australian parliamentary group and commission 4 revealed the dynamism that now exists in Indonesia's democracy. They also revealed a considerable appetite for greater engagement between the parliaments of Indonesia and Australia. Visits are important. But this is something that could easily be achieved by greater use of videoconferences between parliamentary committees here in Canberra and in Jakarta.

The delegation spent several days in West Sumatra with AusAID looking at the impact of Australia's aid. We visited an Islamic school that was rebuilt after the 2009 earthquake, a health clinic that services some 24,000 people, a village that had no running water until Australian aid money provided taps and sanitation and a village devastated by the earthquake where houses were being rebuilt to earthquake-proof standards. In each of these cases it was clear that this was money well spent and projects that all Australians can be proud of.

Before concluding, I would like to place on record the delegation's thanks to those who assisted us during the visits. First, I would like to thank our ambassadors to China and Indonesia, Frances Adamson and Greg Moriarty, for the time that they took to brief the delegation. We also appreciated the interaction and participation of the various
section heads at both embassies throughout the visit. I would like to particularly thank the second secretary in China, Armaity Bradley, for her tireless efforts in putting together the program and accompanying us throughout. Armaity, you were a delight to travel with. I also want to make special mention of David Dukes, the senior trade commissioner, who coordinated our corporate meetings and travelled with the delegation. David is doing great work. His extraordinary love for and knowledge of China rubbed off on us all. Special thanks go to Geoff Matthews, the third secretary in Indonesia, who coordinated our program and travelled with us. Geoff’s first aim was always to please, as he was keen to show us as wide a view of Indonesia as allowed in the few days we had available.

To Rachael Moore, and your colleagues in the AusAID team in Jakarta: you are an impressive group of Australians. Thank you for showing us the valuable development work Australia is doing in West Sumatra. Thanks also go to Australian federal agent Marco Corinaldelsi, who travelled with us in Indonesia and ensured that the security put in place by the Indonesian National Police was as unobtrusive as possible, though that was not always easy. Thanks also to Fiona Way from the International and Community Relations Office for coordinating the visit from this end.

I also feel the need to acknowledge particularly Peter Stephens, the secretary of the delegation, who is in the gallery. Peter made everything so much easier with his willingness to assist the committee with his knowledge of what was required, with his capacity to coordinate with officials and, other than being confused with being the partner of a good senator who was also on the trip, he was a delight to be with.

Before concluding I would like to express appreciation to my colleagues for their support throughout the visit. It was a visit that was well worth doing. (Time expired)

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (10:15): I endorse the remarks by the member for Bruce. I too was on the delegation. It was indeed the 40th anniversary of our relationship with China, and we were warmly welcomed wherever we went and had excellent access to Chinese officials—who were too numerous to mention in the short time that I have available, but we did appreciate the very open discussion we had with the Chinese leadership.

Australians are mostly focused on our trade with China in raw commodities—that is, the mining products from Australia—but in fact the relationship goes far deeper and Australia operates a huge surplus with China. They are our biggest trading partner and our trade includes more than $6 billion worth of agricultural sales from Australia to China. We met with a number of businesses while we were in China, and some of the opportunities that are there for Australian business at the moment are really starting to reveal themselves. There is an emerging middle class in China, which is focusing on clean, green and healthy food. The echoes of the contaminated infant formula are still reverberating—if that is a word!—throughout the Chinese nation. So there is a keen interest in products from Australia.

While Chinese investment in Australia was raised on a reasonably regular basis—and the member for Bruce has already brought that point up—the officials were keen to point out that China should not be treated differently from any other nation when investing in Australia. In the light of this debate it was particularly interesting, for me at least, to be meeting with an Australian company called Lynch Trading, who are cut-
flower wholesalers—the largest in Australia—operating in the Hunan Province, where in fact they have negotiated a 50-year lease, with another 50-year right of renewal—to develop a framing cut-flower industry in China. So just in that line of debate of foreign investment in Australia, and the oft-raised point that we cannot invest in China: in fact there are many companies investing in China at the moment, and that was quite interesting to me.

There are a range of other Australian industries operating in China, and they are very confident of expansion. Energy supply and greenhouse abatement were raised. One of the interesting points made to me was that the Chinese estimated that they utilised just 30 per cent of their hydro-electricity assets up to this stage, which is worth comparing with the restrictions we put on these areas in Australia. Of course, defence arrangement with the US was raised.

In Indonesia I was very pleased to be on the delegation. Indonesia is the most important country, I believe, to Australia—a moderate, democratic Muslim nation of 240 million; our biggest wheat customer and also our biggest thermal coal competitor. We covered a broad range of issues, and the meetings with Indonesian members of parliament were excellent and ranged across the spectrum. I was particularly interested in our visit to the Centre for International Forestry Research in Bogor, where we talked about the effects of palm oil, both on the environment and the economy; and the likely effects of the recently passed anti-logging bill in this parliament on their economy and their ability to manage their industry.

We went to Western Sumatra, as the member for Bruce raised. I won't go back through those projects, but they were very good for us to see firsthand. Of course, boatpeople were raised. And, once again, Australia's relationship with the US and the establishment of American troops on Australian soil.

I would like to thank those who assisted in any way with the delegation—particularly Ambassador Frances Adamson in China and all her staff, and Ambassador Greg Moriarty in Indonesia and all his staff. I would also like to thank the member for Bruce, Alan Griffin, Senator Ursula Stephens and Senator Richard Colbeck for their very good company and fine manner throughout the delegation. I particularly, once again, thank Peter Stephens, our delegation secretary, for his great work ethic and the well structured way he put together the delegation.

COMMITTEES
Education and Employment Committee
Report

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (10:20): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Education and Employment, I present the committee's report incorporating a dissenting report entitled Workplace Bullying: We just want it to stop, together with the minutes and proceedings and evidence receiving by the committee. As you can see it is quite extensive.

In accordance with standing order 39(f), the report was made a parliamentary paper.

Ms RISHWORTH: by leave—The Productivity Commission estimates that workplace bullying costs the Australian economy between $6 billion and $36 billion annually. The human costs are enormous. People's health—both physical and mental wellbeing—productivity and personal lives suffer immeasurably when subjected to bullying.

The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Hon. Bill Shorten, referred the inquiry to the committee in June
to examine the nature, causes and extent of workplace bullying and consider ways to address bullying cultures and prevent their development in the workplace.

The committee received over 300 written submissions—the majority from individuals recounting personal experiences of bullying—and from organisations and experts who have extensive knowledge and experience either in assisting those who have been bullied at work or educating employers on how to prevent and manage this issue. The committee travelled to all states and territories to hear heartrending stories of resultant ill-health, financial strain, loss of self-esteem and suicide as a direct consequence of workplace bullying. Bullying has devastating and long-lasting impacts on affected individuals and their loved ones as well as on our community. No-one should feel unsafe at work, be pushed out of their job, or feel that their life is in peril by remaining in a toxic work environment.

The inquiry was announced amidst a nation-wide harmonisation process of work health and safety legislation—the primary area of regulation of the risks of bullying at work. Harmonised work health and safety laws have now been adopted in all jurisdictions, with the exceptions of Victoria and Western Australia. In addition to this harmonisation effort, governments, unions and employer groups are working to develop a nationally consistent code of practice on managing the risks of bullying. The committee supports the code and hopes to see it expedited and promoted, with guidance materials for employers that detail appropriate responses to and outcomes for reports of workplace bullying. The committee also recommends the introduction of regulations setting a minimum standard of action that must be taken to minimise bullying in the workplace, to establish employers' clear obligations.

Although the committee learnt Australia is considered an international leader in best practice by taking a risk-management approach to workplace bullying, there is still much to do.

The inquiry considered the extent to which Brodie's law in Victoria—an amendment to the Crimes Act brought about to ensure greater sanctions against workplace bullying behaviours—should be nationalised. The committee encourages state and territories to collaborate and ensure their criminal laws are as extensive as Brodie's law so that there is a clear message across Australia that bullying in the workplace is a serious issue.

We must not let bullying get to the point endured by Brodie Panlock. Our report subtitle, 'We just want it to stop', was a constant refrain from targets. Prevention and early intervention are critical to ensure that we reduce the human toll of bullying in the workplace.

Our report contains 23 recommendations that focus on practical solutions we believe will help incidences of bullying in Australia's workplaces. First, there is a lack of clarity about what does and does not constitute bullying behaviour. We support the national adoption of the definition of workplace bullying as repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or workers that creates a risk to health and safety.

Witnesses spoke repeatedly of confusion about where to go for help, and frustrations with different laws and regulations operating in each jurisdiction. People who are bullied do not have recourse to antidiscrimination laws unless the bullying falls under protected attributes such as race, sex and age. Similarly, industrial relations laws are restricted in dealing with bullying. The committee also heard that workers
compensation laws do not provide an easy avenue for redress.

For these reasons we recommend that the Commonwealth government establish a one-stop shop—a national advisory service to provide advice, assistance and resolution services to employers and workers. The committee also recommends that a feasibility study be undertaken on the establishment of independent investigation as well as an adjudicative process for individual recourse for individuals affected.

I thank all of those who provided evidence to the inquiry, particularly the many individuals who courageously relayed their stories. I would like to thank my committee colleagues for the work they put into the report, and also the secretariat support staff—in particular, Lauren Wilson, Stacey Tomley and Sara Edson. This is an important issue, and I commend the report to the House. (Time expired)

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (10:25): I rise to speak on the report, Workplace bullying: we just want it to stop. The coalition members—that is, the member for McPherson, the member for Aston and myself—broadly support many of the recommendations within the report. We reject the notion, however, that bullying in the workplace is normal and that we can afford to ignore the issue. We support from the outset the need for the common definition that was outlined in one of the earliest recommendations in the report.

We have chosen to put in a dissenting report, because there were a small number of recommendations that we felt we were unable to endorse. I would like to particularly thank the government members for their cooperation in working their way through what has been a very challenging inquiry indeed. We had 319 submissions, and many of those came from people who have identified themselves as victims of workplace bullying. Of course, we had no way of ascertaining the veracity of those claims, but certainly the human tragedy of people dealing with multiple issues in their life that they believe originated in the workplace is not to be understated. I particularly thank them upfront for revealing that part of themselves to the committee, because I think it gave a very human perspective to what it was we were trying to talk about.

Interestingly, during the inquiry bullying was often compared to having a guard missing from a machine. But it is much more complex than that, because if a guard is missing from a machine it is quite obvious that the guard is missing. It is a much harder thing to actually identify bullying in the workplace when it may occur behind closed doors or between two individuals who have different thresholds to things that may be said. So it is a very difficult issue for us all to deal with.

The coalition members, as I said, supported most of the recommendations, but we were concerned that we not endorse another raft of compliance and regulation on employers who are already struggling in this area and may already be exemplary employers. If we then place regulatory requirements upon them when they are in fact already ticking all the boxes, that would be a concern. Those are some of the reasons we have pulled back in a couple of areas.

As I said, there were 319 submissions. It occurred to us that it was unlikely we would see businesses and individuals coming forward if they were working in a good, positive environment. So we could not ascertain the level at which workplace bullying is operating in Australian workplaces, but certainly there was enough evidence to say that there is an issue out there. In particular, we were opposed to
recommendation 5, calling for the establishment of regulations to force employers to meet a code of practice that is still under negotiation. We believe that code should first be established and have a chance to work before we overstep the mark in this area. We are also opposed to recommendation 23, which is calling for the right of recourse. We are unconvinced that this would be a positive move because, as the name of the report says, we just want it to stop. It seems to me that, when we come to the point of recourse, the relationship with an employer has completely broken down and it is not about just getting it to stop; it is about trying to get some retrospective justice.

In that sense, we felt that broadening the right of recourse is likely to lead to more antagonism in the workplace. The thing that we do not want to see is a division within workplaces, to see that being a source of confrontation. We need to sell the positive message about what a better place it is to employ people—why it is better for the workers and for the employers to have a workplace which is cooperative and considerate of people's feelings.

I too would particularly like to thank the secretariat for the very hard work that they put in through this inquiry. I would like to thank all those who contributed and I would like to thank the government members for their cooperation.

The SPEAKER: Does the member for Kingston wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a later occasion?

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (10:30): I move:
That the House take note of the report.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 39, the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for a later hour this day.

Report and Reference to Federation Chamber

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (10:31): I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.

Climate Change, Environment and the Arts Committee Report

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (10:31): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and the Arts, I present the committee's second interim report of the inquiry into Australia's biodiversity and the changing climate entitled Case studies on biodiversity conservation: volume 2.

In accordance with standing order 39(f) the report was made a parliamentary paper.

Mr ZAPPIA: I welcome this opportunity to make some remarks in connection with the second interim report of the inquiry into Australia's biodiversity in a changing climate. This report discusses the issues that have arisen in the course of the committee's site inspection activities in Victoria, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. I also take this opportunity to update the House on the progress of the inquiry.

As I reported to the House earlier this year, the inquiry's terms of reference are very broad, and the committee considered that an extensive evidence-gathering process was the most appropriate way to conduct the inquiry. Part of that process involved carrying out site inspections around the country and visiting a broad range of ecosystems of national importance as defined by submissions the committee received. Through the first interim report presented in May and with presentation of the second interim report today, the committee has now
fully reported on key issues that arose throughout the site inspections.

Although the inspection program has concluded, the committee continues to gather evidence for its final report through written submissions, private briefings and public hearings. Since the inquiry began in June last year, the committee has received 87 submissions, 13 supplementary submissions, 60 exhibits and numerous additional documents. We have also held 13 public hearings, covering each Australian state and territory.

Before making specific comments about the report I record my thanks to members of the committee—particularly the deputy chair, the member for Moore—for their bipartisan cooperation and for the significant commitments they have made in relation to the site inspection program.

I also take this opportunity to once again thank each of the organisations and individuals who facilitated the committee’s visits and who took the time to meet with the committee. To the many community representatives, scientists, natural resource managers, officials, and local experts we have heard from, I thank you for assisting the committee with this important inquiry. I particular thank the committee secretariat, who have worked diligently in assisting the committee with its inquiry.

I expect that the member for Moore may speak about the committee’s work as well, and he might refer to the Northern Territory and Queensland visits, so I will confine my brief remarks to the matters relating to the Victorian and South Australian inspections.

In Victoria the committee visited the Melbourne Museum and heard about the invaluable work of the museum in carrying out research related to biodiversity changes. The committee also visited Hastings in Western Port and met with BirdLife Australia to hear about the threats to bird life arising from climate change and sea level rises. In South Australia the committee inspected the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray mouth areas and the Greenfields wetlands in the city of Salisbury. In both areas the committee was briefed about threats and local initiatives being used to preserve the natural environment. Colin Pitman, from the city of Salisbury, provided the committee with a comprehensive overview of the environmental, economic and social benefits of Salisbury’s extensive wetlands and water reuse scheme.

The committee will present its final report with recommendations next year. What is evident to date from the work is that: firstly, there are real threats to Australia’s biodiversity; secondly, each region faces its own unique risks; thirdly, already serious losses of species have occurred throughout Australia; and fourthly, climate change adds to the risks and threats being faced.

On a positive perspective, it is most encouraging to see local communities around the country initiating projects to minimise any of those risks. It is also reassuring to see how much invaluable research work is being carried out by scientists around the country. Their work is vital in our understanding of what is happening and what action can be taken to protect our natural environment.

I understand that other members of the committee may wish to speak to the second interim report. Of course, a much more extensive discussion about the committee’s work will occur when the final report is presented next year. With those brief comments, I present the report to the House.

Dr WASHER (Moore) (10:36): I would also like to thank the secretariat, other
members of the committee, particularly the chair—the member for Makin has done an excellent job in putting this report together—and all the people who contributed to the report. I am pleased to speak on a few aspects of the report titled *Case Studies on Biodiversity Conservation: Volume 2*.

Kakadu National Park is home to approximately 2,000 plant species, 271 bird species—over one third of Australia's bird species—77 mammal species—about one quarter of Australia's mammal species—132 reptiles species, 27 frog species and 246 fish species. Some of these are unique to this area and not found anywhere else in the world.

Existing threats to the biodiversity of the Yellow Water Wetlands region include feral and pest animals, including the Asian water buffalo and cane toads, which started to colonise the park in the 1990s. Grassland and floodplain weeds such as Salvinia and Para Grass are prolific and invasive weeds that tend to quickly dominate and create monocultures in the ecosystems they invade.

The predicted effects of climate change in Kakadu include sea level rise; temperature rises, variation in the amount and pattern of rainfall and changes in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

Biodiversity has a direct impact on local communities as many rely on local plant and animal species as food sources. The Yellow Water Wetlands provide food sources such as lilies, melaleuca trees and magpie geese.

Many local communities are dependent on the tourism industry for their livelihoods and, in turn, the industry relies on the unique biodiversity of the region in order to attract visitors. The loss of biodiversity due to climate change would therefore have significant repercussions for the local Indigenous communities in particular.

Tropical North Queensland is home to both the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area. The Great Barrier Reef consists of many different habitat types including coral reefs, seagrass meadows, tidal wetlands, open waters and islands. Climate change has been identified as the greatest threat facing the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem. Ocean acidification has been identified as a serious threat to the biodiversity of coral reef ecosystems. As atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide increases, the amount of carbon dioxide absorbed by the ocean also increases, causing the ocean to become more acidic. This affects the ability of coral reefs to grow, which could reduce the capacity for repair after induced disturbances, including damage from marine vessels and visitors. Coral bleaching can also inhibit coral reproduction as a result of sea temperature increases.

Research programs run at Reef HQ Aquarium requiring no collection of coral from the Great Barrier Reef are an important measure for research institutions in order to maintain as little human disruption to the structure of the reef as possible. There are collaborative research programs conducted at Reef HQ between local universities as well as a formal educational videoconferencing program for school students connecting to classrooms all over the world on the effects of climate change on reef ecosystems.

The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area covers some 8,944 square kilometres from just south of Cooktown to just north of Townsville. The wet tropics are the most biodiverse terrestrial region of Australia. The main vegetation type is wet tropical rainforests fringed by sclerophyll forests, woodlands, swamps and mangrove forests. There are also several endemic species including the lemuroid ringtail possum. The spread of invasive weeds such as myrtle rust and Koster's curse presents threats to biodiversity in the wetland tropics.
because of their potential to damage the native and agricultural lands and infest tropical areas in other states.

One of the research facilities at the Daintree Rainforest Observatory is the use of dendrometer bands which collect and establish baseline data by measuring stem incremental growth, litter trap and leaf area index. One of the purposes of collecting the data is to report on the risks and threats to lowland rainforest canopy trees under changing rainfall and temperature scenarios. The main threat to both the reef and wet tropical ecosystems is the impact of increasing temperatures. The most effective way of building resilience to climate change for any ecosystem is by managing existing threats.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh): Does the member for Makin wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a future occasion?

Mr ZAPPIA: I move:
That the House take note of the report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 39(d), the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Report and Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (10:41): I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.
Question agreed to.

BILLS

Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Amendment (Cubbie Station) Bill 2012
First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Katter.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (10:42): In recommending the bill to the House, I have just come back from a tour of the Murray-Darling area. To see what this place has done to the Murray-Darling would make any patriotic Australian blush with embarrassment and shame. It should make every member of this place feel utterly ashamed of themselves. At Mildura, we were told that 85 shops in the town have closed. I drove around the vineyards and the orchards and I felt one in 10 were closed down and was informed that the figure was much closer to one in five. In Griffith, they said 120 shops were closed. I do not know if this is true or not, but these are the things that were being told to me. There most certainly seemed to be many shops closed. In Deniliquin, we were told that there were normally 60 or 70 houses for sale; there are now 155 houses registered for sale.

This place has destroyed the economic base of all inland New South Wales. This place has destroyed the economic base of Northern Victoria and south-eastern South Australia. This place has not destroyed Queensland, because Queensland's Murray-Darling allocation is mostly Cubbie Station. No, this place has kept all the water intact at Cubbie Station and handed it all over to a foreign corporation, when there were other bidders in Australia. What the government should have done was to break up Cubbie Station into 10 or 12 civilised sizes where there would be owner-operators instead of fly-ins from the coast. Most of Cubbie Station is done by fly-in work out of Brisbane, in the main. But instead of doing that they sold it as one big heap, and they sold it to a foreign corporation.

The allegations in this case are very interesting because they are similar to the allegations in the case concerning—and it is not sub judice at the present, so I can speak up—the South Johnstone sugar mill, which
was sold. Two mills smaller than it had been sold for over $130 million. We are talking about a mill worth $150 million. It was sold for $2 million because the people that are liquidators are people who are corruptible to a point of being illegal and should be committed to jail. This is happening again, again and again.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh): The honourable member for Kennedy is reminded that particular allegations against individuals are best pursued through a substantive motion.

Mr KATTER: I have not made any allegations against any individuals. I have made general remarks concerning liquidators.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am simply reminding the honourable member of the standing orders.

Mr KATTER: I take the Deputy Speaker's comments. In this case it has been sold to foreigners. In the last five weeks the biggest farm in Australia, Cubbie Station, has been sold to foreigners—the biggest water licence. It has not been bought by the government for environmental flows. It has been sold to foreigners—the biggest water licence. This place sold the biggest fishing licence in Australia. Only through the actions of my colleague from Hobart here beside me, seconding this resolution—on other issues completely, environmental issues—was the decision reversed. But the government had already made the decision to sell.

I came back from Tasmania, where another 20 per cent of their second biggest industry—and it is one of their only two industries—the timber industry, has been chopped away, leaving the economy of Tasmania almost a basket case because of the actions of this government. So they have wrecked an area—not this government, mainly the last government, actually; but this government most certainly have been up to their eyeballs in it—leaving an area stretching throughout all of New South Wales. Two-thirds of New South Wales: gone. Two-thirds of Victoria: gone. One quarter of South Australia: gone, destroyed by government action. And now of the 20 per cent of what is left of poor little Tasmania, half of it has been given to some subcommittee of UNESCO over in New York. All human activity on half of Tasmania is controlled by a UNESCO subcommittee. I know, because north Queensland suffers the same fate, so I speak with authority.

But let me go over it. The biggest farm: sold. The biggest water licence: sold. The biggest fishing licence: sold. The biggest dairying area in Australia: sold. The 10th biggest cattle station in area in Australia: sold. The daddy of them all, the big, grand, colossal Santa Claus of all destructive decisions is the Ord. Here is one of the great achievements of the Australian people—to bring irrigation and development into the north-west, the most outback and most unpopulated part of Australia. It is a great dream of all Australians. The second stage could have been put up as 1,000-hectare farms.

The government of Western Australia or the government of Australia could have put up ethanol to give us something that we could grow there—they could have done that. They continually refused. This government is the only governments in the world that does not have biofuels by law in petrol tanks. People die when you have not got oxygenated petrol in their petrol tanks. That is why they put biofuels and ethanol in their petrol tanks. We are the only country on earth not to do that.

The Chinese will not buy ethanol off Australia. Now that they are producing...
ethanol in Australia, they will buy it from their own operation in Australia. But they were given a huge area—some 20,000 hectares, an area bigger than Cubbie Station. It carries a $600 million subsidy with it. The government will not subsidise Australian farmers; they will not give us a cent. The Liberal Party will not and the Labor Party will not. They will not give Australian farmers a single cent. And yet they will deliver to a foreign corporation a $600 million subsidy. The Ord dam was built by the taxpayers of Australia. The delivery channels, which cost as much as the dam, were built with Australian taxpayers' money. And yet the government has taken it upon itself to sell them.

If they had given us ethanol and they had given us 15 or 20 1,000 hectare farms you would have been killed in the rush. But the ALP believes in corporate farming, the biggest disaster in agriculture in Australian history. The Liberal Party believes in corporate farming even more. That means that it has to be a corporation; we could not possibly have an owner operator! The only farms in Australia that operate at a profit are the owner-operator farms. Every corporate farm in this country, to my knowledge, have gone broke, not once but again and again. Collie farm has gone broke six times. The two big mango farms have gone broke four times. Then there is the disaster in grapes and wine. I do not have to tell anyone in this place about Great Southern. All the cattle stations—(Time expired)

Bill read a first time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh): In accordance with standing order 41(c), the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Fair Work Amendment (Tackling Job Insecurity) Bill 2012
First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bandt.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (10:53): As we head towards the Christmas break, most of us are looking forward to a couple of weeks off to relax and perhaps to indulge and wind down. But for many Australians it can be a time of great stress as they go without paid leave and as many of them wonder whether or not their contract is going to be renewed next year. We are now in a position in which one in four employees in this country does not enjoy paid leave. That is a national shame. It is something that we need to tackle, because it is having an effect on the ability of millions of people around this country to plan their lives and to take the kinds of steps necessary that the rest of us take for granted to live a secure and planned life.

The Fair Work Amendment (Tackling Job Insecurity) Bill 2012 will mean that millions of Australians trapped in insecure work will have a pathway to secure employment. It will mean that a mother who needs to look after a sick child will have a right to take personal leave. It will mean that a contract teacher who works year after year to teach our children will finally be able to apply for a mortgage. It will mean that a temporary worker who is stuck in an endless cycle of labour hire will have an opportunity for more certainty. The essential premise of almost all the deliberations in this chamber is that we must work towards a strong economy. I and the Greens agree.

However, there is another underlying premise that, if we take all the steps necessary to serve the economy, it will automatically serve us—but I do not agree that this will always happen. As our Greens
leader, Christine Milne, said at the National Press Club in September:

We want an economy that serves the people; not the other way around. We must remember that the economy is a tool that we invented. If the economy is not delivering the outcomes we want, making us happy, safe, healthy, better educated and fulfilled, then it is time that our economic tools changed.

There has been a growing trend towards insecure work in Australia, where a staggering number of casuals, and people on rolling contracts, now make up our workforce. Around 2.2 million employees are not entitled to paid holiday or sick leave and have no guarantee of ongoing secure employment. We are often told that this is because business needs flexibility. But I believe this trend is symptomatic of what can start to happen if we let markets become our masters and when financial risk, in an increasingly uncertain world, is transferred away from companies and onto workers—because that is what has happened in Australia over the last couple of decades.

The growth of the casual workforce from around 15 per cent in the 1980s to around a quarter of all employees now is part of the phenomenon that was articulated in the 2010 report, Shifting risk—work and working life in Australia, produced by the Workplace Research Centre. They observed that people are now required to absorb more and more financial, social and economic risks and therefore experience much more financial and social stress. The landmark inquiry report from a previous Deputy Prime Minister, Brian Howe, Lives on Hold, that was released by the ACTU in May this year, builds on this and gave voice to many of those who are trapped in the cycle of insecure work, which often robs them of the ability to make long-term decisions and plans about their lives.

I do acknowledge that there is a place for casual labour in the workforce. It can be used to address genuine business needs, and it can be beneficial for people who only want short-term employment with higher rates to compensate for the lack of tenure. It can be a win-win arrangement. But that is not always the case. In 2007 over half of all casual employees reported that they would prefer not to work on a casual basis. Most of these would prefer to have both paid holiday leave and sick leave, even taking into account the effect that this might have on their income. Over half of all casuals have been employed in their current jobs for over a year, and over 15 per cent of casuals have been in their jobs for more than five years. As I said earlier, many people at this time of the year face the prospect of the holiday season without paid holidays. Those of us in secure employment, as we look forward to a relaxing break to recharge—and perhaps even over-indulge—should remember that this is not a luxury shared by all.

In addition to casuals, there are also a significant number of people on fixed-term contracts and rolling fixed-term contracts. In 2011 there were almost 400,000 people—just over four per cent of all employees—engaged in this form of insecure work. But it is worth noting that these arrangements are heavily concentrated in education, with 15 per cent of the workforce on fixed-term contracts. This means that education alone accounts for almost a third of all employees on fixed-term contracts in Australia. These are the people who are teaching our kids and are bringing up the rest of us through secondary schools and universities, and over a third of all employees on fixed-term contracts are found in education. Numerous teachers will be finishing their contracts in the next few weeks with no guarantee of what the future might hold. What should
become a time of rest will become a time of stress.

Many of these teachers may well commence new contracts when school starts next year but, surely, if a contract is regularly renewed, should it not be ongoing? If a strong economy does not deliver secure jobs, is it really serving the people? If some people can only find insecure work then we risk creating a new underclass of people who may never qualify for a mortgage, who may never be able to choose to start a family. Surely, as a society, we should aspire to provide secure jobs for everyone who wants them. The Greens believe that tackling job insecurity is a public good, and this bill addresses that issue. This bill amends the Fair Work Act to provide a process for workers employed on an insecure basis to be moved to ongoing employment on a part-time or full-time basis. The right of small businesses to use genuine casual employees will be preserved, with such employees excluded from the operation of the bill. This exemption for small businesses is consistent with the existing objects of the Fair Work Act.

Two general classes of workers are eligible to request secure employment arrangements from their employers: casual employees and rolling-contract employees. The bill defines a rolling-contract employee as someone who has been employed on a fixed-term contract by the same employer doing the same type of work on two or more occasions. An eligible employee or their union must make a request for a secure employment arrangement with their employer in writing. The employer must give the employee or their union a written response to the request within 21 days. If the employer refuses the request, the written response must include the reasons for the refusal.

If a request is refused then an application can be made to Fair Work Australia for a secure employment order. In deciding whether to make a secure employment order, Fair Work Australia must have regard to a number of factors, including the needs of employees to have secure jobs and stable employment, and an employer's capacity to use arrangements that are not secure employment arrangements in cases where this is genuinely appropriate while having regards to the needs of the business.

A secure employment order may apply to one or more persons or class of persons and may be implemented in stages as Fair Work Australia thinks appropriate. Unions may also apply directly to Fair Work Australia, as may employer associations, for secure employment orders on behalf of classes of eligible persons such as a particular industry, kind of work, type of employment or employer. Small-business casuals will be exempt from any such orders of general application.

The bill does not seek to ban casual labour or fixed-term contracts. These are valid industrial instruments that will be available when genuinely needed. The bill does not remove management prerogative to make business decisions about using insecure employment arrangements but makes sure they are used legitimately and reasonably and leaves open the right of Fair Work Australia to determine that there are circumstances in which an employer may not have an appropriate right to use, say, labour hire or other arrangements.

Good successful businesses have nothing to fear from this bill. Good businesses know that long-term investment in their workers is a good investment. Good successful businesses know that secure workers are more productive workers and that productivity can grow if we invest in our
workforce. Good successful businesses know that the growing casualisation of our workforce is unsustainable.

The trend towards insecure work is by no means inevitable. Many other OECD economies have experienced similar structural economic changes and dynamics as Australia but do not have the same levels of insecure work. Only Spain has a higher rate of insecure work than Australia. Spain has one in three workers in temporary employment because of a large seasonal rural workforce. The Greens and the ILO believe that the casualisation of the workforce can have widespread damaging impacts on society, leaving workers and communities in unstable and insecure situations, disrupting their life-planning options. If we can provide secure jobs then we should provide secure jobs.

Bill read a first time.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Juvenile Diabetes

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (11:03): I move:

That this House:

(1) promises to remember all children with type 1 diabetes; and

(2) notes that 100 young Australians with type 1 diabetes will be in Parliament House on 29 November 2012 as part of Kids in the House.

This week the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation will be bringing in 100 young Australians living with type 1 diabetes to Parliament House to meet with federal members of parliament and to raise awareness and gain support for young people with type 1 diabetes. Dane Boyd, from Shortland electorate, will be one of those young people. Dane and his mother, Kim, walked with me on 18 November in the JDRF Walk to Cure from Warners Bay to Speers Point in Lake Macquarie.

The 100 young people living with juvenile diabetes will also be accompanied by their families, leading diabetes scientists and high-profile individuals that have been affected by type 1 diabetes to hear personal accounts of their experiences of living with type 1 diabetes and of how it affects all elements of their lives such as school, hobbies and at home. Type 1 diabetes is very common. In fact, one of my staff, Mark, has a grandchild who has type 1 diabetes and has experienced many difficulties over a long period of time. Talking to him has shown me the challenges that those young people face.

The Kids in the House event will be widely supported by all members of parliament because it transcends our political philosophies. We all know that these children need our help and support. Type 1 diabetes—or juvenile diabetes, as it is often called—is a lifelong autoimmune disease. It strikes both children and adults, but it is most common in children and it is usually diagnosed before the age of 15. It is the most common chronic disease in children. Approximately 1,825 Australians are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes each year. That shows just how significant it is. The incidence is increasing by 3.2 per cent per year. The disease is not fully understood, but there is cutting-edge research and each day we hope there will be a cure found for this disease. The body's immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas, removing a person's ability to produce insulin.

People with type 1 diabetes take multiple insulin injections daily and test their blood sugar level by pricking their finger for blood four or more times a day. The insulin pump has been quite a breakthrough that has helped a number of young people. Mark's
granddaughter is one of the young people who has recently had an insulin pump installed and has benefited enormously from that. The destructive disease is not caused by lifestyle or diet. That is a misconception a number of people have. It cannot be prevented and there is no cure. Ninety-five per cent of all children under the age of 18 with diabetes will have type 1 diabetes. Insulin allows a person to stay alive; it does not cure it. Australia has one of the highest rates of type 1 diabetes in the world. Over 122,000 Australians live with this difficult disease, which represents about 10 to 15 per cent of all people with diabetes. The number of people diagnosed with type 1 diabetes has increased by an enormous 37 per cent in the last decade. The majority are children and young adults.

This motion is important. This motion gives members of both sides of the House the opportunity to show their support for the children who will be visiting parliament this week. I pledge my support for all children suffering with type 1 diabetes and guarantee that I will do all within my power to support and assist them. (Time expired)

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (11:08): I would like to thank the member for Shortland for bringing this very important motion forward. On Thursday, as she said, 100 young Australians from across the country will come to Parliament House with one request: 'Promise to remember me.' These young Australians are but a handful of more than 120,000 people, mostly young people, already diagnosed with juvenile diabetes, for which there is no known cure and we do not know the cause. Diabetes is a debilitating illness that can impair a person's quality of life. It requires a lifetime of complex intervention. It is a major cause of limb amputation, blindness and renal failure, amongst other things. People with diabetes have a much increased risk of developing heart disease and other vascular diseases. So it is a very serious illness.

Whilst we do not know the cause of juvenile diabetes we do know at least two critical points. We know that insulin is not a cure. We are very grateful to Frederick Banting for having found insulin, because without it people would simply die, but it is not a cure. There is a flame in Canada which burns brightly. It will continue to burn until the next step is taken—that is, a cure is found for diabetes—and then the light will be extinguished. The other critical point is that diabetes disproportionately affects Australians. Worryingly, Australia is ranked seventh highest in the world for the number of people with type 1 diabetes, when our total population is not even in the top 50 countries. The number of newly diagnosed cases also continues to rise each year.

If we in this place are serious about our promise to remember—I know that many members over the years have been deeply moved by the presentations of young people who have come to put their case to this parliament—the action that we really need to take speedily is to ensure that there is a consistent, coherent approach to research for a cure for diabetes. We have some of the best researchers in the world, and they are working very hard to collaborate with other leading researchers in diabetes not just across Australia but also globally, so that the money we put into research is well used. Our chances of success are enhanced by these national and international collaborations.

We do not know when the day will come that a cure will be found but we know that it will never come unless the first steps are taken along that journey. The opportunity is with us now, today, this year. Kids in the House are asking that the government commit to $35 million in funding for a clinical research network to test potential
breakthroughs—and there have been some amazing breakthroughs. I do not have time to go into those, unfortunately, at this point of time, but I would just like to say that along with research we need to ensure that our young people have access to best-practice medicine. One of the programs that we tried to get implemented—it is still not working as efficiently as it might—is an insulin pump and continuous glucose sensors.

I had a very sad letter from a constituent who is now deceased. She wrote this letter to me and never got to post it because, as a result of a hypoglycaemic episode and her inability to afford continuous glucose sensors after her endocrinologist suggested it would be life-saving for her, she passed away. She became unconscious in her bed, having worked a night shift. This young woman was not wearing a continuous glucose sensor. She was unable to be revived and passed away. It is a sad fact that there are many Australians for whom that is the reality, including very young children. So I ask members of the parliament to support a move to make sure these devices are available. (Time expired)

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (11:14): I rise in support of the motion of the member for Shortland, and commend her for bringing it to the attention of this place. Type 1 diabetes is a life-long autoimmune disease, that usually occurs in childhood but can be diagnosed at any age, affecting over 122,000 people in Australia alone. Type 1 diabetes is caused by the immune system mistakenly turning on itself, destroying beta cells within the pancreas and removing the body's ability to produce insulin.

I represent an electorate in Western Sydney, an area which has the highest prevalence of diabetes in New South Wales, with seven out of the state's 10 hotspots for diabetes. In fact, between 2005 and 2010 the rate of diabetes in Western Sydney has more than doubled. There is therefore a special obligation on me to support this motion and to highlight the importance of diabetes awareness, including understanding the differences between the various forms of the disease.

In my electorate of Greenway, 6,877 people are living with type 1 diabetes. I have had the privilege of meeting with a number of these constituents and listening to their stories, and I bring them to the attention of the House today. I recently sat down with my constituents, Claudia Jane Wood and her mum Jo, to talk about the type 1 diabetes that Claudia Jane suffers and the Promise to Remember Me campaign. What a brave and positive young woman. I could not even contemplate—and I am sure that many of us here could not either—having such a disease and living with it so positively. I was so impressed by her outlook on life, on living it to the full, as well as the support of her family. She self-medicates, but that has not stopped her from going on beach holidays and remaining an active sportswoman.

As a Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation advocate, Ms Wood is working to find a cure for type 1 diabetes and its complications through the support of research. I look forward to joining Ms Wood and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation this Thursday for the Kids in the House event in the Great Hall, and I encourage all members to visit.

I also acknowledge my constituents Kenneth Shepherd and Sarah Pyke for their work as members of the Australian Diabetes Council. Both Mr Shepherd and Miss Pyke have highlighted to me the challenges faced by people with diabetes, including the need for access to essential services. Miss Pyke is insulin dependant and required four injections every day. Both Mr Shepherd and Miss Pyke have conveyed to me that access
to health professionals and good management of diabetes can prevent complications and help people with diabetes to live long and healthy lives. And there are scores of other constituents who have contacted me in recent weeks who have brought their own stories of type 1 diabetes to my attention. Although time does not permit me to name you all individually today, I acknowledge each of you and your commitment and advocacy.

Since 2010 I have fought to improve health services in my electorate, and I am very proud of the investment that we have been able to make, including more hospital beds and investments in elective surgery at Blacktown Hospital, $17.6 million for the Blacktown Clinical School, $15 million for the Blacktown GP superclinic, more GP registrations, massive investment in primary care infrastructure and the Healthy Communities Initiative. But these are, of course, in response to huge regional challenges that we face in Western Sydney. So we need to respond now, and we need to keep it up.

I also note that the Commonwealth government funds the Australian Type 1 Diabetes Clinical Research Network, the CRN, which helps to facilitate faster progress towards curing, treating and preventing type 1 diabetes. Through clinical trials, successful type 1 diabetes research can be turned into new, accessible therapies and treatments for people suffering from type 1 diabetes.

In closing, I again thank my constituents for bringing this important issue to my attention, and I acknowledge the member for Shortland for bringing this important motion to the House. As the tagline goes, I 'promise to remember' all people suffering from type 1 diabetes and to continue fighting for better health services for people in my electorate, including research into type 1 diabetes, to stamp out this cruel disease once and for all.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (11:18): I too would like to thank the member for Shortland for bringing this motion to the House. One of the privileges of our role as parliamentarians is the opportunity to meet with and listen to the stories of a wide variety of people in our electorates. It was in this way that I first came to hear the personal story of somebody in my electorate with type 1 diabetes. I will never forget that meeting or hearing the story of young Josie Hingst, a grade 6 student at St Joseph's Tobruk Memorial School in Beenleigh. This bright-eyed, smiley, confident young lady is the last person you would suspect of being unwell. Josie invited me to her school to listen to her presentation in front of her classmates about living with type 1 diabetes, a condition she has had since she was five years old. This young lady could most certainly have a future in politics, as she gave a flawless, entertaining and, at times, humorous presentation on the misconceptions and realities surrounding living life with type 1 diabetes. For starters, Josie shared with her classmates the fact that diet has absolutely nothing to do with getting type 1 diabetes and she said it made her very angry for people to assume she has the disease because of some form of self-neglect. There are a lot of people who do not understand the difference between type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease—it just happens. The pancreas stops making insulin, which we need because without it the cells in our body cannot break down the sugar from our food into energy. This means the body cannot do what it needs to do to stay alive.

Josie is a passionate ambassador for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's 'Promise to Remember Me' campaign and is one of two young ambassadors whom I have
had the pleasure of getting to know in the electorate of Forde. The other is Caitlin Watt, a young lady who also suffers type 1 diabetes. She is a grade 11 student at Trinity College in Beenleigh. She was diagnosed when she was 22 months old and has been living with the condition ever since. At seven years of age, Caitlin said she had to worry about where to do her finger pricks at school and what was going to happen if she had a ‘hypo attack’ in class. Most seven-year-olds only have to worry about making friends and their plans for the weekends. It is just so different for young people who suffer from this disease.

To give you an idea of what it is like for these two young ladies, Caitlin has had over 22½ thousand insulin injections and has pricked her fingers to check for blood sugar levels over one million times. Josie used to have at least 1,500 needles a year before moving to a 24/7 insulin pump. It is not easy to monitor insulin and blood glucose levels, either. They have to measure the exact amount of carbohydrates they consume to ensure the right dosage of insulin to avoid having a hypoglycaemic attack.

For these bright young ladies, all they want is a lifestyle that is free from the daily regime of needles, cleaning out cannulas and getting run down, a freedom that the rest of us take for granted. Not even on their birthdays or for Christmas do they get to take a day off from the hourly checks and insulin balancing acts. It also puts an awful lot of pressure on the parents and families, as they learn how to look after their children all over again. It is never easy to have a sick child, and I would like to thank the parents with children in the same position as Josie and Caitlin for helping their children with this burden to ensure they are able to live as normal lives as possible.

As other speakers have mentioned, this week children living with type 1 diabetes will attend Parliament House as part of the annual Kids in the House awareness program for type 1 diabetes. Josie, along with 100 other children from around Australia, will be taking part. I hope they all have a wonderful experience at Parliament House later in the week and that we as parliamentarians get out and support these children and the juvenile diabetes campaign. (Time expired)

**Mr Champion** (Wakefield) (11:23): I would like to thank the member for Shortland for bringing this motion to the House and acknowledge the contributions by the members for Pearce, Greenway and Forde. It is nice to be having a bipartisan debate about a very important issue. We have heard all the members talk about their electorates and the people they have met. The member for Forde said it is a member of parliament's duty to get a window into the lives of other people. We do that around our electorate. We often come across situations that really strike at and call on your empathy. That is certainly true of juvenile diabetes.

There is no doubt that this is a very grave and serious illness. You would not wish it on anybody. The idea that a child could die in their sleep without warning is terrifying, particularly for parents. That is the terrifying reality for some people. It is something that we should be cognisant of when we are discussing this issue. It is a terrible disease.

It is just lucky that the 123,000 Australians who suffer from it have such great advocates. Those advocates are often at the national level. They work in electorates around the country. The people who have come to see me most often are people like Karen Aswell and Jasmin Smith, who just graduated the other day from Trinity College and has her licence. She is looking to see what she will do in the world. That is a wonderful time in a young person's life. She
is a tremendous advocate. I think that she is coming up for the Kids in the House event.

The other people who have been to see me are Marsanne Kerr and her daughter Imogen Kerr, who is a very active advocate; a very activeemailer. Her mother, Marsanne, is famous in my electorate. The *Barossa Herald*, which is a very good paper, reported that she had taken to the skies and been part of a group of about 50 people from South Australia who skydived to raise money for and awareness of this issue. The jumpers were called 'Imogen's Heroes'. It was a big crowd—50 people, like I said—jumping from a height of 14,000 feet. Marsanne managed to do two somersaults in mid-air before sailing down to the ground with her instructor. That event raised $30,000. That is part of a massive fundraising effort.

It is a worldwide effort. This is not something that is suffered by just Australian families or Australian children. If you Google JDRF and particularly Kids in the House, some of the first links that come up are about an event that is being held with the Canadian parliament. This is a worldwide advocacy effort to help children and adults who have this rather terrible affliction. The money raised will fund clinical trials and fund things like insulin pumps and other things that help manage this illness and allow people—hopefully—to lead normal lives even with the disease. We hope in the longer term to find a cure.

Obviously, everybody in this House will be furiously lobbied towards the end of the week. We can only hope that there is a bipartisan consensus to keep up the fight against juvenile diabetes, to keep the research going, to keep the clinical trials going and to keep our focus on the 123,000 Australians who suffer from this disease.

Mr **WYATT** (Hasluck) (11:28): I rise today to add my voice to this campaign to raise public awareness of children suffering from diabetes. Type 1 juvenile diabetes is a serious condition that impacts nearly 125,000 Australians, and many more around the world. One of my own part-time staff members has diabetes and I have seen firsthand the impact that this has on his life.

Juvenile diabetes occurs more frequently than cancer, cystic fibrosis, multiple sclerosis and muscular dystrophy and yet it is a condition that is little understood by the community and has significant stigma attached to it. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition caused when the immune system destroys beta cells within the pancreas and inhibits the body's ability to produce insulin. Type 1 diabetes is a condition that can be managed, albeit with difficulty. This is a fickle condition that requires close monitoring to ensure that the sufferer maintains the fine balance between hyperglycaemia and hypoglycaemia. As we slowly gain more understanding of types 1 and 2 diabetes and their causes, it is important that our approach to managing these conditions changes to reflect our growing knowledge.

The challenge that we face at this point is that our learning through research is not informing our management of the condition. It is becoming increasingly clear that lifestyle factors make a significant contribution to the development and management of juvenile diabetes. With this knowledge, it is vital that we take steps towards creating better understanding in the general community about diet and the wide-reaching impact on the health of all Australians, including those with juvenile diabetes. There is no doubt that we need better education and the availability of more information to parents of children with juvenile diabetes. The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation is working hard to understand type 1 diabetes and to find a cure,
but there is much more that we, as policy makers and legislators, can do to support the community. As I have said before in the parliament, cultural change is best achieved through education and understanding. It is important that there is a discussion in the public sphere about the nature of juvenile diabetes.

Every win that we have had in the war against juvenile diabetes has been achieved through the activities of volunteers. Over the last four decades we have seen breakthroughs in islet transplantation, beta cell regeneration, preventative vaccine development and reduction of complications. But despite these advancements we have seen little change in the way that this disease is managed in the community.

I would like to share with the House two quotes, the first from Mary Tyler Moore, the actress. She said diabetes changes everything about a person's life:

And to add to the day-in, day-out hassles of living with diabetes—the balancing of diet, exercise, and insulin, the shots, the terrible episodes of low blood sugar, the weird feelings of high blood sugar—is the knowledge that even if you do all you can to be as normal as possible, you're not, you're different, and you face the uncertainty of an adulthood visited upon by early blindness, kidney failure, amputation, heart attack or stroke.

Michael Wooldridge adds international context to the debate as well:

Juvenile diabetes is an insidious and elusive disease that affects some 100,000 young Australians who have to inject insulin several times a day and balance this exercise and ... avoid life threatening hypoglycaemia.

Our community approach needs to catch up with the research available, and one way to do this is through advocacy. I am impressed with the commitment that young people with diabetes have in increasing public awareness of this condition. I have met with many youth ambassadors and seen their efforts in sharing the challenges that they face with juvenile diabetes. This week 100 young people from across the country are visiting parliament to meet with parliamentarians and to share their stories and personal challenges surrounding this disease. I am anticipating an engagement with the young ambassadors that will enlighten even my own understanding of the issue and the challenges in a far better way than I currently have. It is through the telling of stories and the sharing of those experiences that we gain an understanding of the breadth of impact that it has on an individual's life, the challenges they face, and the way in which they rise to those challenges and become engaged within the community in which they live. I am happy to support the motion put forward by the member for Shortland.

**Ms SMYTH** (La Trobe) (11:33): I am very pleased to be able to contribute to this debate and commend the member for Shortland for bringing the matter to the House and also commend each of the other participants in the debate so far. I am extremely pleased that the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation is in the parliament this week, together with so many young people facing juvenile diabetes and their families. This includes, from my own electorate, my constituents Jo and Livinia Martin.

Jo and Livinia came to see me earlier this year to tell me their story. Livinia has experienced juvenile diabetes for some time now and continues to be a very strong ambassador, both for the research effort which JDRF pursues and also for increased awareness within her school community and the broader community. I certainly commend Livinia, her mother Jo and their family on the work that they have already done to explain what juvenile diabetes means for Livinia and the thousands of other young people facing the disease.
I must say I was struck by the maturity of Livinia who, at a relatively young age, has had to contend with the daily practicalities and realities of her illness. She has certainly managed admirably the responsibilities that go with that. I was also struck by the extent to which she was aware of the risks that might present themselves to her and other juvenile diabetes sufferers later in life. It is an extraordinary thing to contend with at such a young age.

As many members in this debate have remarked, type 1 diabetes can occur at any age, but most commonly it is diagnosed from early childhood to the late-30s. Extraordinarily, it presently affects over 122,000 people in Australia alone. As members will no doubt know, with type 1 diabetes a person's pancreas produces little or no insulin. Although its causes are not entirely known, it is believed to be caused by the immune system mistakenly turning on itself and causing the destruction of beta cells within the pancreas and removing the body's ability to produce insulin.

People with type 1 diabetes, as many of us will also know, must inject insulin several times every day or have a constant supply of insulin through an insulin pump just to stay alive. For young people in particular, the reality of having to deal with that each day and families having to administer the arduous regimen of insulin is an extraordinary task which many young people have to face but really should not have to face. Most newly diagnosed cases are children aged under 15 years. Around 1,825 Australians are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes each year, which is a considerable number. The incidence, however, is increasing at a rate of around three per cent per year. In Australia, around 95 per cent of the diabetes found in children is type 1 diabetes.

Members who have spoken in this have remarked on the symptoms that present themselves, of which it is recommended the community be aware in the assessment of potential risk of type 1 diabetes. Those symptoms include extreme thirst, constant hunger, sudden weight loss, blurred vision and extreme tiredness, amongst other things. Treating juvenile diabetes requires ongoing vigilance and monitoring and it is a significant task for many young people and their families. But timely and routine treatment is essential because the risk of complications arising from the disease is also significant. Members have remarked—and no doubt those who are present in the House this week from JDRF and are supporting its efforts—will be happy to explain to members in this place that the risks associated with diabetes, and the complications arising from it, include such things as eye disease, nerve damage, kidney disease, heart disease and stroke.

Once again, I am very pleased that the JDRF are in the House this week. I look forward to joining them and Jo and Livinia from my electorate at the Kids in the House event on Thursday to support JDRF. It is clearly a very significant organisation in its research effort and in raising awareness of type 1 diabetes. It has taken a significant role also in leading the agenda in terms of scientific research and I am sure that we will all continue to support its efforts. (Time expired)

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (11:39): I thank the member for Shortland for her motion recognising the devastating impact that juvenile diabetes has on our society. I welcome the 100 young Australians suffering from this chronic disease who will be visiting this place later in the week as part of the Kids in the House program. This motion draws on the great work performed by the Juvenile Diabetes Research
Foundation, which runs the Promise to Remember Me campaign to start a conversation with members of parliament about type 1 diabetes and the importance of supporting those suffering from type 1 diabetes and to aid research. JDRF is the leading not-for-profit funder of type 1 diabetes research. Worldwide they have invested over $1.6 billion in research since 1970, including more than $100 million in Australian research. JDRF estimates there are 122,300 Australians suffering from type 1 diabetes.

This motion follows our recent recognition of World Diabetes Day on 14 November, which is an official United Nations world day. This day is recognised worldwide every year and brings together millions of people in over 160 countries to raise awareness of the challenges of diabetes. The theme of this year's World Diabetes Day campaign was: 'Diabetes education and prevention'. In my electorate of Bennelong we are fortunate to have several large pharmaceutical and medical device companies that create jobs, invest in research and development, and work towards a brighter future for those suffering chronic disease like diabetes.

As I did last year, I attended the World Diabetes Day event at Eli Lilly headquarters in West Ryde. This event invited all staff to join in a celebration of their great work and to hear from a Diabetes Australia representative about how the personalised solutions they provide can make a difference in the daily lives of those affected by this disease, particularly those suffering from juvenile diabetes. This includes working with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation to offer the best range of support and advice for diabetes patients. This World Diabetes Day event was also a call for action on our fastest-growing chronic disease. There are 1.15 million Australians who have been officially diagnosed with diabetes. Perhaps even more alarming is that the New South Wales diabetes population is approximately 410,000, which is larger than the population of our nation's capital. I told those assembled at this event that, as diabetes becomes a national health priority, we need to take action and make changes in our lives to protect our health and the health of our children.

With type 2 diabetes representing the most common form of preventable illness, it is vital that we as community leaders promote the benefits of healthy living and a range of support services available to people suffering from diabetes. As chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Medicines, I have been a strong advocate in this place for sufferers of a wide range of diseases, both generic and preventable. The growth of type 2 diabetes warns us of a frightening future when the cause of deaths in our society is linked to the underlying illness. Type II diabetes has become the biggest killer in Australia. There is no greater challenge in health than to effect a combination of prevention and treatment of this disease. We should acknowledge the genuine concern for outcomes by the pharmaceutical industry at large on the issue of prevention, which they raise with me time and again as an area of great concern. Essentially, in the time that we will see the middle class of Asia grow from 500 million to 3.5 billion, this middle-class disease will become the greatest health challenge for our region. It is our duty as policymakers to meet this challenge.

I again thank the member for Shortland for raising this motion and making sure that we in this place promise to remember those suffering from juvenile diabetes. I also applaud the work of companies like Eli Lilly Australia and their managing director, Chris Miskel, who so eloquently and passionately
advocate treatments and actions to treat both types of this disease.

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh—Second Deputy Speaker) (11:43): I rise to speak in favour of this motion by the member for Shortland and its recognition of all children with type 1 diabetes. It is always sad to see young people afflicted with such a disease—children who are trying to lead a carefree life with their friends, exploring the world and testing their limits. It is sad for people so young to be confronted with such an issue with their health and having to face their survival every day. It is a fundamental issue.

We know that people with diabetes, whether it is type 1 or type 2, are up to four times more likely to develop cardiovascular disease. Over two-thirds of Australians who died of cardiovascular disease had diabetes or pre-diabetes five years prior to their heart attack or stroke.

It does not have to be that way. I love speaking to young people. This week we have many young people joining us to talk about diabetes, including type 1 diabetes. I love giving them a personal story about diabetes. My father, who is 85 years old, has been a type 1 diabetic for well over 45 years. He has led a healthy lifestyle, he is active and is far more fit than I am, I would say. He rides his bike, walks every day and has two to three injections every day, and has been doing so for over 45 years.

That is the other side of it: if you do look after yourself and manage your diabetes carefully, you can have a normal life like anyone else. My father is living proof of that. As I said, he is much fitter than I am; he still rides his bike eight to 10 kilometres three to four times a week at 85 years of age. I certainly hope that young Australians who learn to manage their diabetes at a relatively young age have its management as a central element of their routine throughout their lives and that, with that superior management, they will defy the statistics that I read out earlier and join those of us who are more likely to live a longer, more complete and healthier life.

Australian researchers are leading the world in their work towards finding a cure for type 1 diabetes, through several highly regarded organisations. I, for one, have had most to do with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, which conducts a fundraising walk in my electorate every year. I am very honoured to be invited every year to do the opening and sound the siren for everyone to take off in their walk from Glenelg to Somerton Park. It is always a terrific occasion, with many enthusiastic participants and supporters, generating a great crowd every year. Fundraising is necessary for the ongoing research toward a cure. Some discoveries have happened by accident, without apparent effort, but in this case a tremendous amount of work is required for relatively modest gains.

I would like to pay my respects to the consummate professionals in the medical research field, who all of us here in this place see and speak with on a regular basis, here in Australia and around the world—those who conduct the studies and those in the organisational wing which make the research possible so we can find a cure in the future. I must say how much I respect each and every young Australian with type 1 diabetes, for taking on board the knowledge of the disease, informing us as their members of parliament, maintaining the management regime that is required, and putting up with the limitations and complications that result from being just that little bit different to others—and just that little bit more special as well.

One such young Australian, who sets a very good example of maturity and grace for
us all, is Casey Stubing, whose company I will have the pleasure of sharing at the JDRF Kids in the House luncheon in the Great Hall, Parliament House, on Thursday. I have met with her and her parents in my electorate office as well as on the walk we conducted in my electorate. I presented her with an award at her primary school's year 7 graduation ceremony. We met again a couple of months ago when she visited to discuss the walk, and it will be an absolute pleasure this week to speak with her again and spend time with both her and her family here in Parliament House.

Meeting and speaking with people like Casey reminds us all of the reality of type 1 diabetes, its presence, prevalence and impact, and our need to continue to work towards solutions to improve to the management that Casey and so many others maintain each and every day. Thank you, Casey, and all those who have come to Canberra this week to remind us of and keep us focussed on type 1 diabetes and the funds required to do the necessary research toward better management techniques, prevention and a cure.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:48): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Shortland. I should note that, while 100 young Australians will be visiting parliament this Thursday, they certainly will not be alone. Many staff in Parliament House and in our electorate offices around the nation live with diabetes. Even in my office, one of my staff members has lived with diabetes since he was 13 years of age.

Type 1 diabetes, often referred to as juvenile diabetes, is among the most common chronic diseases among our young people, with more than 1,800 young Australians being diagnosed with the disease each year. However, it should be remembered that children with type 1 diabetes become adults with type 1 diabetes, for this is an autoimmune disease that is with you for life. So perhaps in this motion, although we should remember all the children, we should also remember all other Australians with type 1 diabetes.

The National Diabetes Services Scheme is a government program designed to assist those with diabetes to afford the exorbitant costs associated with the ongoing medical treatments. The NDSS celebrated its 25th anniversary this year. It is a highly successful program that has evolved and expanded over its 25 years of operation. I am pleased to say it has done so with bipartisan support.

Many suffering with diabetes, especially older Australians, fondly remember the Howard government's initiative to completely subsidise insulin syringes back in the 1990s. But this is not to say that some of those costs associated with the treatment of diabetes are not still prohibitive. This is made particularly the case when new developments and technological breakthroughs are made. The costs of running an insulin pump and the associated lines of cannulas are not cheap. Even under NDSS subsidisation it is still expensive and can be a financial impost that is simply too high for some families to sustain, let alone when you look to include unsubsidised continuous monitoring technology. So we in parliament must keep an ever present eye on the developments in the treatment of diabetes to ensure that the successful scheme maintains its effectiveness. However, we should also remember that the NDSS subsidises treatment. While some in the field have described the insulin pump as a vital cure, it is not a cure. It should not be forgotten that continued research, whether it be in islet cells or in other fields, must retain our strong bipartisan support.
Finally, I am pleased to speak in this debate because it provides a further opportunity to raise a particular timely issue faced by those people who are living with diabetes. In March this year Austroads and the National Transport Commission, released the updated assessing fitness to drive regulations, which incorporated blood sugar benchmarks for the very first time. Needless to say, much concern has arisen from the inclusion of the benchmark of what would be a HbA1c result of nine, which is both arbitrary and without clinical evidence. Even more frightening is the concern that these benchmarks will be strictly enforced without due consideration to extenuating circumstances such as a particularly high stress level in the three-month period or an unrelated illness such as the flu pushing up blood glucose levels. The concern is inflamed as there are many GPs who are simply unaware that the benchmarks contained in the assessing fitness to drive regulations should be treated with discretion. This rule has put one million Australians at risk of losing their licence, even without having a strong backing of clinical evidence.

This recent case is not alone. There has been a wave of arbitrary regulations developed to target Australians living with diabetes. Work is being done on the second initiative designed to encourage diabetics not to drive with blood sugar levels under five millimoles per litre. While this benchmark, which usually packages 'above five to drive', is well-meaning, it is again arbitrary. Hypoglycaemia is a significantly more dangerous driving risk than is hyperglycaemia, especially due to the immediacy of the symptoms. However, few diabetics will suffer the effects of hypoglycaemia until they record results in the three.

I support this motion. However, in the area of diabetes we must be sure further research is done in this area before bureaucrats race in to regulate.

Mr McCormack (Riverina) (11:53): Diabetes myelitis type 1, also known as juvenile diabetes, is a form of diabetes which results from the autoimmune destruction of insulin producing beta cells of the pancreas. This type of diabetes accounts for 10 to 15 per cent of cases of diabetes worldwide. That means there are about 20 million people living with type 1 diabetes in the world. In Australia, more than 123,000 people are affected by type 1 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in children, occurring more frequently than cancer, cystic fibrosis, multiple sclerosis and muscular dystrophy. In Australia, 1,825 Australians are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes every year. The incidence of this disease is increasing at a rate of 3.2 per cent in Australia. That is an alarming statistic. Furthermore, of the children diagnosed with diabetes, 95 per cent are diagnosed with type 1. Complications from type 1 diabetes include kidney problems, visual impairment and nerve damage due to damage to the small blood vessels. Larger vessels can also be damaged, which can lead to coronary artery disease, stroke and narrowing of limb arteries.

Currently there is no cure or preventive measure for type 1 diabetes; those who live with the condition are dependent on insulin injections for the rest of their lives. Currently underway is the type 1 diabetes prevention trial, a major Australian clinical trial to determine whether an insulin nasal vaccine can help prevent type 1 diabetes. Since the trial began in 2006 more than 7,500 people have been screened in Australia and New Zealand to assess their eligibility, with 76 participants being enrolled to participate in the trial. If successful, this vaccine could prevent type 1 diabetes and the need for daily insulin injections for people at risk.
In my electorate of the Riverina, a seven-year-old boy by the name of Bruno Romeo and his mother Lisa and his family have been forced to leave the city of Griffith to seek medical treatment for Bruno's diabetes. Mrs Romeo has worked hard to try to attract a qualified diabetes educator to Griffith but, unfortunately, she has been unable to do so. So Mrs Romeo has made the big call of moving to Canberra for the sake of Bruno's health, where he will have an insulin pump fitted in January.

The *Area News* wrote a very moving story about this little boy. He is a brave child, as are all children who suffer from type 1 diabetes. And Mrs Romeo is also a very brave mum. She wants to do the best for the young fellow and for her family. She said a steady decline in her son's health had cemented the decision to move to Canberra, where he will have an insulin pump fitted in January. 'Bruno is having five or six injections a day. It is a big upheaval for our family but the doctor in Canberra said Bruno is the type of child who will thrive on a pump. He said that, if he put one on, he would have to move so he can be monitored properly. If he has a pump, we might actually be able to sleep through the night for the first time in four years.' You can imagine that poor family not being able to sleep through the night whilst Bruno is suffering from this terrible condition. 'People do not understand what is involved in having a child with diabetes,' Mrs Romeo said. 'The sooner he gets the pump the better. I know this isn't going to be easy, but this is going to be life-changing in every way.'

The Australian Diabetes Council Griffith group president, Tom Marriott, said there was no doubt that Griffith should have an educator who can supervise pumps. 'They keep saying we cannot attract anyone here, but they will not allocate the money.' Of course, any money that goes into health and into education programs for this type of thing has to be a priority of this government and of this parliament. We all know that health is the most important thing that we as parliamentarians can fund and make sure is available for all communities and especially regional communities, where the tyranny of distance is such a factor.

I met last week with 11-year-old Thomas Zambon and his mum, Melissa, to discuss how he copes with having type 1 diabetes. I am pleased to say that Thomas will be in parliament on Thursday at a function called Kids in the House, which will recognise type 1 diabetes. Young Thomas is a fighter. Despite his ailments, he will lead the very best life that he can because he is such a brave little fighter.

Debate adjourned.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Abuse in Defence**

Mr **STEPHEN SMITH** (Perth—Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House) (11:59): by leave—Today as Minister for Defence I deliver an apology on behalf of the government to the men and women of the Australian Defence Force who have suffered sexual or other forms of abuse in the course of service to the Australian Defence Force and their country. The men and women of the Australian Defence Force—past, currently serving and future—are entitled to be, and deserve to be, treated with the highest levels of admiration and respect, not just by the Australian people but also by fellow members of the Australian Defence Force and the Australian defence organisation generally. These are the men and women who volunteer to serve their country, placing their country's safety and security above their own. They have left their families and their loved ones to train and serve, often in difficult and dangerous conditions. These are the men and women...
who are prepared to pay the highest cost in their commitment to their country and their duty.

Since Federation, the Australian military has rightfully held a high place in the regard of the Australian people. The Australian Defence Force is an organisation which has demonstrated the highest standards of professionalism, of courage and of sacrifice in peace and in wartime. But, terribly and sadly, the experience of some members of the Australian Defence Force over the years has not always reflected these high standards. Not all members of the Australian Defence Force have been treated with the necessary respect required to meet both common decency and these high standards.

Since the so-called ADFA Skype incident in April 2011, Australians have again seen stories emerge of sexual and other forms of abuse in Defence—shameful treatment by members of the Australian Defence Force of their own colleagues. These stories range from experiences in the 1950s right through to the present day. Young men and women have suffered treatment which no member of our defence force or our community generally should experience. Young men and women have endured sexual, physical or mental abuse from their colleagues, which is not acceptable and does not reflect the values of a modern, diverse, tolerant Australian society.

We have also seen claims that people who have occupied positions of trust in the Australian Defence Force and the Department of Defence have abused that trust through their behaviour, including through the turning of a blind eye. Such experiences have had a lasting, serious and traumatic adverse impact on the people who have experienced them.

We also recognise that there are people in the Department of Defence who work alongside members of the Australian Defence Force in the service of Australia and in the service of our national interest. The Department of Defence is an institution which also seeks to uphold the highest values of ethics and behaviour. Sadly, men and women in the Department of Defence have also experienced abuse. In the aftermath of the ADFA Skype issue people have told me that after years of suffering from the memory of the abuse they experienced they seek recognition of their experience and an apology which acknowledges that it should never have occurred. To those men and women in the Australian Defence Force or the Department of Defence who have suffered sexual or other forms of abuse, on behalf of the government I say sorry. You should never have experienced this abuse. Again, I say sorry.

Allegations of abuse have been addressed in April through the DLA Piper review into sexual or other forms of abuse experienced. This process has seen a preliminary review of allegations from over 1,000 people. Action on these allegations will now be taken under the leadership of the Hon. Len Robert-Smith QC, a former justice of the Supreme Court and judge of the Court of Appeal of Western Australia.

Acknowledging the past and taking responsibility for it is only the first step. We must ensure that such abuse can never be tolerated again. We must place the safety and wellbeing of the young men and the young women of the Australian Defence Force above all else. The Australian Defence Force, the Department of Defence and their leadership are committed to change and to taking action to protect the young men and women in their care. This is best expressed through the Pathway to Change strategy adopted by Defence in March this year. It states:
Recent events and a suite of Reviews remind us that we need to ensure our people demonstrate exemplary behaviour commensurate with the nation's expectations, in and out of uniform, on and off duty.

... ... ...

We have learnt, to our cost, that we do not consistently meet these high standards and, more worryingly, that our culture has tolerated shortfalls in performance.

... ... ...

We will ... take actions to shift attitudes and willingness to speak up when we become aware of inappropriate behaviour by a colleague in Defence.

The government and the Defence leadership are committed to ensuring the ongoing reform and systemic change in Defence necessary for Defence to ensure zero tolerance into the future of such inappropriate conduct.

This commitment is demonstrated by the presence in the House of the Chief of the Defence Force, General David Hurley, and the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Dennis Richardson. General Hurley will himself release a statement of apology today to members of the Australian Defence Force. They are joined in the chamber by Len Roberts-Smith and the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Liz Broderick.

Our words today and our actions, and commitment into the future, will ensure that the apology given today in this House to those men and women in the Australian Defence Force and the Department of Defence, who have been subject to abuse, will never have to be repeated. I thank the House.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (12:06): by leave—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent Mr Robert speaking for a period not exceeding seven minutes.

Question agreed to.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (12:07): Today in the House the coalition offers its strongest and unqualified support to the government as it offers a formal apology to the men and women of the Australian Defence Force who have suffered abuse in the course of their service to our nation. Ours is a unique fighting force—a small but potent military that has delivered a disproportionate effect upon every battlefield on which we have fought. We have a rich military history and we can rightfully hold our heads high amongst the concert of nations when it comes to defending freedom. Our history of military endeavour is second to none. Yet despite this overwhelming battlefield success, there has been a flood of complaints, some going back to the 1950s, of abuse within the ranks.

Our military personnel are our greatest asset. Their wellbeing will always be our No. 1 priority. Their care while serving our nation is not a price we pay; it is a duty we all undertake. By any standard, the litany of abuse allegations are completely unacceptable, let alone by the standards of the finest fighting force in the world, the ADF. This conduct does not accord with the values of our society let alone the values of our military. Our military is a disciplined force; however, the DLA Piper review has made it clear that there have been elements and individuals within the Defence Force who used their power or position and inflicted abuse on those who sought only to serve their nation. We deeply sympathise with and say sorry to those who have experienced abuse at the hands of those who were to be trusted with their leadership and their care. Theirs was a great betrayal.
This abuse should never have happened and every effort must and will be made to ensure that it does not happen again. Our military must train hard and it must fight hard, but as they do we must not allow our men and women to suffer any type of abuse in any way. This is not who we are as a nation and certainly not who we are as a military. Abuse destroys lives, it limits our operational capability and it undermines public confidence in our Defence Force.

We are always at our best when we pause, walk in the shoes of others and reflect on their experiences, when we acknowledge their pain and commit to right that which is wrong. This is the start of that journey. Accordingly, the government will enjoy the full support of the coalition as it establishes its Defence abuse task force and the process it undertakes. We will provide every support to senior Defence leadership and we have faith in their capacity to work with the task force to both assist it in its work and implement its recommendations. Today we will stand shoulder to shoulder with the government in our absolute commitment to care for those who care for us.

**BILLS**

**Assent**

Social and Community Services Pay Equity Special Account Bill 2012

Social and Community Services Pay Equity Special Account (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2012

Customs Amendment (Smuggled Tobacco) Bill 2012

Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Amendment Bill 2012

National Portrait Gallery of Australia Bill 2012


Customs Amendment (Military End-Use) Bill 2011

Defence Trade Controls Bill 2011

Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Further 2012 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2012

Commonwealth Government Securities Legislation Amendment (Retail Trading) Bill 2012

Higher Education Support Amendment (Maximum Payment Amounts and Other Measures) Bill 2012

Water Amendment (Long-term Average Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment) Bill 2012

Messages from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bills.

**COMMITTEES**

Gambling Reform Committee

Reference

The SPEAKER: I have received a message from the Senate informing the House of a resolution of the Senate referring a bill to the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform.

Constitutional Recognition of Local Government Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER: I have received a message from the Senate concurring with the resolution of appointment of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government and informing the House of the appointment of senators to that committee.
BILLS
Returned from Senate
Higher Education Support Amendment (Maximum Payment Amounts and Other Measures) Bill 2012
Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Further 2012 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2012
Commonwealth Government Securities Legislation Amendment (Retail Trading) Bill 2012
Appropriation (Implementation of the Report of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers) Bill (No. 1) 2012-2013
Appropriation (Implementation of the Report of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers) Bill (No. 2) 2012-2013
Illegal Logging Prohibition Bill 2012
Federal Circuit Court of Australia Legislation Amendment Bill 2012
Water Amendment (Long-term Average Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment) Bill 2012
Crimes Legislation Amendment (Serious Drugs, Identity Crime and Other Measures) Bill 2012
Superannuation Laws Amendment (Capital Gains Tax Relief and Other Efficiency Measures) Bill 2012
Superannuation Auditor Registration Imposition Bill 2012
Tax Laws Amendment (Clean Building Managed Investment Trust) Bill 2012
Tax Laws Amendment (2012 Measures No. 5) Bill 2012
Corporations Legislation Amendment (Derivative Transactions) Bill 2012
Personal Liability for Corporate Fault Reform Bill 2012
Superannuation Legislation Amendment (New Zealand Arrangement) Bill 2012
Freedom of Information Amendment (Parliamentary Budget Office) Bill 2012
Judicial Misbehaviour and Incapacity (Parliamentary Commissions) Bill 2012
Courts Legislation Amendment (Judicial Complaints) Bill 2012
Access to Justice (Federal Jurisdiction) Amendment Bill 2011
National Health Security Amendment Bill 2012
Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Amendment Bill 2012

Message received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.

COMMITTEES
Public Accounts and Audit Committee Report

Leave granted.
Mr OAKESHOTT: These reports mark the 10th time the Joint Standing Committee of Public Accounts and Audit has met with the Commissioner of Taxation and are the first reports made on an annual basis. Firstly, I note the Australian Taxation Office's agreement to all recommendations directed towards it at last year's public hearing, as well as the joint recommendation agreed to by the Australian National Audit Office, the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Inspector-General of Taxation. The adoption of these recommendations has improved scrutiny of ATO, the reporting of ATO's service standards and the conduct of the committee's review into tax administration. However, the Australian government disagreed with the committee's recommendation to publish ATO notifications on tax administration and legislative problems within 12 months, nor will it publish the government's response to these notifications. Although recognising that this recommendation may mean that sensitive information is realised to the public, the committee remains convinced that the increased transparency and additional incentive for timely action from government would be of overall benefit.

Considering this year's review, the committee found that the administration of Australia's tax system remains robust. Although the committee covered a range of important areas, a handful of issues warrant additional comment. These areas include service standards, increasing complaints to the Commonwealth Ombudsman, calculating the tax gap, and tax reform. Looking at service standards, the committee found some clear improvements in taxation administration in the past year. In particular, the committee was pleased to hear of the positive comments towards the ATO on their service during the tax time period as this was an area that had been of concern in the past—in particular, in the previous year.

However, the committee also found some deficiencies in administration, with the Commonwealth Ombudsman reporting that ATO complaints for the 2012-13 period were at a 10-year high. Further, the Ombudsman reported occasional deficiencies in ATO complaint handling and referred these matters back to the ATO for further consideration. The committee is supportive of the ombudsman doing this but believes the ATO should be properly handling complaints in the first instance rather than having its deficiencies identified by an outside body.

Discussion also took place about calculation of what is known as the tax gap. A tax gap is the difference between the amount of tax payable if there were complete compliance versus the amount actually collected over a defined period of time. The committee believes that development of practical methodology needs to be given more consideration in Australia, as it is done in other jurisdictions, and looks forward to the response to the recommendation made which calls for this analysis to be undertaken. The hearing also briefly discussed general tax reform, identifying the need to consider broadening the tax base, reducing compliance costs and eliminating inefficient taxes. The need to examine interactions with state taxes was also identified. These issues should be examined and addressed as a priority.

This is an ongoing private and public debate that involves the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit but also the executive, the opposition, the parliament, state parliament and many tax experts. Keeping our tax base robust and certain so that we can confidently deliver the services Australians need and expect is our most important duty as parliamentarians. As stated
before, this work on comprehensive tax reform should be a priority for government.

On a final note, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the departing Commissioner of Taxation, Mr Michael D'Ascenzo, and thank him for his cooperation throughout this process. I note that it was clear in the public hearing that the commissioner was held in high esteem by his colleagues, the scrutineers of the ATO and the taxation community of practice. Many of the improvements to tax administration in recent years have occurred under his watch, so, upon his departure, he can be proud of the robust system and organisation he leaves behind.

In closing, I thank all witnesses involved in this process. I thank the committee members once again and the secretariat for their assistance in the conduct of this public hearing and the preparation of this final report. I commend the report to the House.

In accordance with standing order 39(f) the reports were made parliamentary papers.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Parliamentary Delegation to 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Switzerland and Germany and Austria

Mr ADAMS (Lyons) (12:16): I present the report of the Australian delegation to the assembly of the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union held in Bern, Switzerland and the bilateral visit to Germany and Austria on 16 to 25 October 2011. I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with this report.

Leave granted.

Mr ADAMS: I thank the House. I am pleased to present the report of the Australian parliamentary delegation which participated in the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union assembly in Bern, Switzerland and also undertook bilateral visits to Germany and Austria in October 2011. As the report attests, this was another successful and hardworking parliamentary delegation at the IPU assembly. The delegation were active participants in the proceedings. This report outlines the various presentations and meetings that featured in the delegation's program.

Australian delegations at assemblies of the Inter-Parliamentary Union have established a reputation for making a significant contribution to the IPU through their hard work, often behind the scenes, to facilitate dialogues and broker agreements across a wide range of global issues. The high regard in which Australia is held within the IPU is reflected in the election of Australian representatives to key positions in drafting committees at the assembly in Bern. Senator Ursula Stephens was appointed chair of the drafting committee for the emergency resolution 'On the plight of people of famine-stricken Somalia and relief efforts by the IPU members parliaments'. I was appointed chair of the drafting committee for the emergency resolution 'Nuclear weapons: the road to zero'. These discussions drew together a number of prominent experts, including Mr Gareth Evans, co-chair of the International Commission on Nuclear
Non-proliferation and Disarmament and former Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs. The delegation was honoured to meet the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon. The Secretary-General commended Australia on its support of preventative diplomacy efforts in the Pacific and on the important leadership role Australia continues to play in the region. He also expressed his gratitude to Australia for logistic support during his historical visit to attend the 42nd Pacific Islands Forum in Auckland.

The delegation's visit to Austria and Germany provided excellent opportunities to explore issues around sustainable energy production, nuclear non-proliferation, education and the Eurozone crisis. I found the series of meetings on Germany's dynamic approach to renewable energy policy particularly interesting. Many of the issues we discussed around market and system acceptance, land use and the debate around food versus fuel are familiar to Australian parliamentarians. It was also of benefit to be able to explore the successes and lessons learnt from alternate models for encouraging and supporting diversity and innovation across all sectors of the renewable energy industry.

It was also hugely beneficial for the delegation to be able to receive such comprehensive briefings from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Organisation and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and to discover how highly valued Australia's contribution to the work of these important organisations is. The delegation came away with a clear impression of the importance of continuing to support and strengthen the capacity of such agencies to undertake their roles.

Parliamentary delegations are an important part of building inter-parliamentary relationships. The delegation was grateful for the opportunity to meet with parliamentary counterparts in the German and Austrian parliaments and continue the already well-established parliamentary dialogue between our parliaments. The discussions we had were frank and good humoured and provided honest insights to a number of significant issues of common interest.

At the Austrian Parliament, Ms Barbara Prammer, President of the Austrian National Council, generously made time available on the eve of celebrations to mark Austria's national day. In Germany, Mr Jurgen Herrmann MdB and his colleagues on the Germany Australia New Zealand Parliamentary Friendship group were equally generous with their time. The delegation was saddened to hear of the sudden death of Mr Heim Neumann in August this year. He was a good friend to Australia, with a firm commitment to fostering inter-parliamentary relations.

I would like to commend the many people who contributed to the success of the delegation's visits. I would also like to thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for their high level of assistance to the delegation. They provided both advance briefing material and on-the-ground support at the IPU Assembly in Bern and throughout Germany and Austria. Australia's ambassadors to Germany and Austria, Mr Peter Tesch and Mr Michael Potts, and their staff put together outstanding programs and provided practical support to the delegation. I make special mention of Mr Phillip Anderson, the delegation's Foreign Affairs adviser to the IPU Assembly in Bern, for his advice and professional support throughout the assembly.
I would also like to thank staff of the Parliamentary Library, the parliament's International and Community Relations Office and the Department of the Senate, who provided briefings, advice and assistance with the arrangements for the delegation.

In closing, may I again congratulate my fellow delegates for their hard work and good humour throughout this highly successful series of visits. I commend the report to the House.

COMMITTEES
Gambling Reform Committee

Report

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (12:23): On behalf of the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform I present the committee's advisory report, incorporating dissenting reports, on the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012, the National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 1) 2012 and the National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 2) 2012 together with evidence received by the committee. I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Mr WILKIE: Thank you. On 21 January this year the Prime Minister announced a package of poker machine reforms, and the bill which the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform has now inquired into reflects that announcement.

In essence, the bill requires—and the committee supports—that all poker machines in Australia be fitted with pre-commitment technology and dynamic warning displays and for virtually all ATMs in poker machine venues to have a $250 daily withdrawal limit. Regarding precommitment, the legislation specifies that all new machines must have the technology from the end of 2013 and that the remainder of the national fleet must be progressively retrofitted. Venues with more than 20 machines have until the end of 2016, venues with 11 to 20 machines have until 2020 and venues with 10 or fewer machines can change over their machines in the normal replacement cycle.

Crucially, while the use of the precommitment system is to be voluntary, machines and/or systems must be capable of preventing unregistered play. In other words, they must be capable of mandatory precommitment at the flick of a switch. To further strengthen this arrangement, the committee suggests players should be able to set their limits away from venues and poker machines, that decreases to the limit a person can lose should take effect immediately and that transaction statements be provided on request and regularly to help people keep track of their losses.

The committee also recommends that the Productivity Commission's review of the implementation of this legislation include the ban on biometrics, the issue of linking precommitment to loyalty schemes, whether or not there are grounds for further exemptions or extended deadlines for smaller venues in regional and remote areas, and the issue of including EFTPOS transactions in the $250 per day ATM withdrawal limit.

The pokies industry has expressed concern about the one-size-fits-all time lines and conditions placed on the states and territories in the bill. But this concern is unwarranted, because the bill is not prescriptive and solutions can be determined on a state-by-state basis from a broad range of technical options. In any case, there are a number of precommitment systems already running in Australia, giving the committee confidence the industry can meet the time lines.
Industry is also concerned about the cost. The poker machine industry is not being asked to replace all its machines overnight as it would have us believe; in fact, the conversion of most machines is more than four years away, as is the deadline for jurisdictions to have installed or upgraded their networks.

In any case, let us put all this in perspective and remember the Productivity Commission found that in 2008-09, national expenditure on poker machines was $11.9 billion. How much of this was lost by problem gamblers? The answer is some $5 billion. That is right: some $5 billion was lost by problem gamblers on the pokies in just one year. Yet the industry says the spending of just a fraction of one year's loss spread across a number of years is unacceptable. Frankly, I do not know how some of them sleep at night.

The bill also establishes $250 daily withdrawal limits on ATMs in gaming machine premises other than casinos. The ATM Industry Reference Group wants this amount increased plus a 12-month lead-in time. While the committee cannot support the increase limit, it does agree more time is warranted and recommends an end 2013 deadline.

While the committee welcomes the establishment of the Australian Gambling Research Centre within the Australian Institute of Family Studies, I wish to correct the impression that this fully delivers on the recommendation made in the committee's earlier reports. What is needed is a genuinely independent, fully transparent centre with the strongest possible research credentials. Only time will tell if the Australian Gambling Research Centre has what is needed and whether or not governments are genuinely committed to fund it.

The bill is much less than what might have been, and the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform's report includes a number of dissenting and additional comments. Nonetheless, the bill is a significant first step towards meaningful poker machine reform in Australia and it has the support of the committee majority. On behalf of the committee, I thank all those who assisted the inquiry. I would also like to thank the deputy chair and the committee secretariat for, again, doing a fine job in sometimes difficult circumstances. I commend the report to the House.

In accordance with standing order 39(f) the report was made a parliamentary paper.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (12:29): by leave—As the deputy chair of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform, it is a pleasure to speak on the tabling of the committee's fourth report that covers the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012 and related bills. The government takes seriously the need to act to make poker machines safer. We need to help protect problem gamblers, whose addiction is hurting not only themselves but their families and others. The bills intend to reduce the harm caused by poker machines. They are based on the evidence and recommendations of the Productivity Commission.

In May 2011 the Council of Australian Governments Select Council on Gambling Reform agreed to support the required infrastructure for precommitment technology in all jurisdictions in every gaming venue. The committee heard that an extensive consultation process with industry and community stakeholders occurred in early 2012 after the exposure draft was released. In addition, consultation on specific issues was undertaken by the department, the minister and her office outside the formal
consultation period. Precommitment is a tool that poker machine players can use to set a budget and limits around their play, and the system can assist them to remain within those limits. The system is voluntary and its use is free for players.

The bill requires that all gaming machines in larger venues are part of a state-wide precommitment system by the end of 2016 so that those who choose to set limits can ensure they apply wherever they play. We recognise that small pubs and clubs, many in our regional areas, just are not the same as the big gaming venues in the city. The bill gives longer time frames for small venues to make the changes, and more than half of all venues nationally have more time. The bill establishes minimum requirements for the system, but states and territories will be able to impose stronger measures. The committee makes a number of suggestions in its report for enhanced functionality to assist players, based on evidence from previous inquiries.

While concerns were expressed to the committee about implementation, the committee heard that the bill is not prescriptive regarding precommitment technology. The bill sets parameters, and the technical solutions to meet those parameters can be determined by each state and territory. This recognises that states and territories have different monitoring systems in place and allows them to choose from the range of technical options available. Technology options range from network options to machine based options. Multiple systems are also possible.

Allowing jurisdictions to determine their own systems encourages innovation by industry. I also note there are already a number of precommitment systems operating in Australia which may be compliant with the legislation. The government has been working to minimise the cost to industry and minimise the regulatory burdens. Regarding the time lines for venues, there has been consultation with industry as well as independent work around that aspect which found that the initial time line and extended time line for smaller venues are achievable. Mindful of the concerns expressed around smaller venues, the committee recommended that the Productivity Commission review this aspect when conducting its review of implementation, to take an evidence-based approach to whether any additional time should be provided to very small and regional and remote venues. The committee called for an education campaign, and it is the government's intention to implement a campaign, in collaboration with the regulator, industry and other key stakeholders. Education within gaming venues will be an important component of initiatives to support the introduction of the gambling reforms.

The bill introduces complementary reforms to further support problem gamblers. There is a $250 per day ATM withdrawal limit for gaming machine premises other than casinos and exempted premises in smaller communities where access to cash is not readily available from non-gaming outlets. Taking into consideration the self-imposed moratorium throughout the Christmas-New Year period and technical issues, the committee did not oppose extending to the end of 2013 the time frame of May 2013 to achieve this measure.

The bill also establishes the Australian Gambling Research Centre within the Australian Institute of Family Studies, which will start in July 2013. It will help address the current lack of robust evidence and consistent data available to inform problem-gambling policy development. The centre will receive ongoing funding from the government of $1.5 million per annum.
This is the first time the Commonwealth has legislated to help problem gamblers and their families. Recognising that there is no single solution to address problem gambling, the measures outlined in the bill form part of a suite of measures announced by the government on 21 January this year. I would also like to note in this context, separately from the recommendations of the report, the ACT trial of mandatory precommitment will be independently reviewed by the Productivity Commission upon completion.

In closing, I want to thank the member for Denison for very capably chairing the committee and for running this inquiry very smoothly. I thank the committee members for their contributions and I thank the witnesses who provided evidence to the committee. I also wish to express my sincere appreciation of the excellent and dedicated support given by Lin Beverley from the secretariat—often on weekends and often late at night. I commend the report to the House.

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (12:35): by leave—I rise to speak to the report from the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform tabled this morning. I must say I am particularly surprised to hear the comments from the deputy chair. Today represents the tabling of a report which could only be described as woeful. I am not commenting on the report itself but on the process. Based on one day of hearings, we have a report being tabled on new legislation that is being introduced by the government and supported by the member Denison that will adversely affect an industry that employs hundreds of thousands of people.

Before the deputy chair leaves the chamber, I would highlight the deputy chair's comments about industry consultation and the time frames involved in the rollout of voluntary precommitment that the government is implementing. Apparently industry says that it is possible to do so within the time frames outlined in the draft legislation that the report alludes to. How completely wrong. For the deputy chair to come into the chamber and say that industry believes this is achievable is highly misleading because the deputy chair knows full well the evidence that coalition members heard, the evidence the chair heard and the evidence the deputy chair heard.

The advice from industry was that there will be mass noncompliance. They were their words: mass noncompliance. Industry made it clear that this was effectively a kiss of death, not because of voluntary precommitment but because of the time frames involved. This government is running headlong into trying to achieve its result for no other purpose than it happens to suit the member for Denison.

The member for Denison is a sincere man. I believe that he sincerely holds the views that he holds. I think that he does not particularly care about the impact this is going to have on industry—that is my view. I believe it is his view that in the balance between impact on industry and impact on problem gamblers, he would rather side with the problem gamblers—and so be it.

The impact of this draft legislation will be profound. It will cost jobs. It will result in mass noncompliance. The committee's report does not address these facts. There is only one group that the department consulted with that says the time frame is achievable. From industry consultation and from stakeholder consultation, it is not possible for this time frame to be complied with. Mass noncompliance will be the consequence and job losses will be the consequence—and to hell with the impact of that, say the majority of the committee. Not so the coalition. We support voluntary precommitment. The
government was out there saying it wanted mandatory precommitment because that was a part of the deal that was done before the Prime Minister turned her back on the member for Denison and double-dealed him on this—as she did the Australian public on climate change but that is another debate for another day. When the Prime Minister did that, the reason we were out there then saying we should have voluntary precommitment was that we understood there is no silver bullet. There is no panacea to problem gambling in the same way there is no panacea to alcoholism or to those that face morbid obesity; yet for some reason the majority of this committee took the view that they have got the solutions. Well, it is simply not going to result in any meaningful outcome. In fact, it is going to threaten livelihoods and threaten the industry.

In addition to that, the draft legislation does outline mandatory withdrawal limits on ATM machines within licensed venues. We have tried to be constructive as coalition members and to work with the majority with respect to the amount of money that can be withdrawn. The amount of money that was first recommended by the Productivity Commission will be indexed.

In addition, I think there is a greater principle at stake here—that is, government policy which says to people who do not have a gambling problem, which is of course the vast majority of recreational poker machine users as well as the vast majority of the Australian population, that there is a limit on how much of their own money they can access from an ATM based on its location. The government has now deemed it okay to say how much of your own money you can withdraw from a machine based on the location. Safeguards already exist of course and problem gamblers can be excluded from using ATMs in licensed venues. They can have lower daily withdrawal limits—arrangements they can choose to enter into with their bank provider, in the same way that they might choose to have voluntary precommitment. Notwithstanding that, when it comes to ATMs the government is happy to mandate behaviour that it believes is appropriate.

My final point is about the most insidious issue. It is a point that is not really addressed in the majority report. It is absolutely the case that this is shaping up to be the precursor to a biometric system of identification across the Australian population, especially for those who want to use poker machines. There are members on the committee who I understand hold the view that in order to achieve the compliance required under this draft legislation and to achieve state based regulation around voluntary precommitment, a database will be needed at each of the state regulators that monitors players' activities. In the absence of a biometric system, such a database would be useless. It would not be possible to monitor players' activities if you do not know who the player is. Believe it or not, some problem gamblers may resort to using two, three, four or five cards, and this is why it has to be linked back to identity. The chairman and I have had this debate before and, based on views and comments on the public record, I know that that is absolutely where this is going. This is the first door. For that reason, coalition members do not support the majority report and why we have lodged a dissenting report.

Public Works Committee Report

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (12:42): On behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, I present the sixth report for 2012 of the committee, Referrals made May to September 2012, and I ask leave of the
House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

In accordance with standing order 39(f) the report was made a parliamentary paper.

Ms SAFFIN: by leave—On behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, I present the sixth report of 2012, addressing referrals made May to September 2012. This report deals with four referrals with an estimated total cost of $932.6 million—a lot public funds. The first inquiry I will address examined the proposed Defence Logistics Transformation Program, or DLTP, for the Department of Defence. The purpose of the DLTP is to deliver new or refurbished purpose-built infrastructure that will enable the seven joint logistics command units to provide enhanced support to Australian Defence Force elements and operations. The overall project cost is $752.7 million. The current defence wholesale storage network operates from outdated infrastructure spread across 201 warehouses in 24 locations. The DLTP will consolidate the wholesale logistics network to seven primary sites, supported by nine specialty retail sites. This will provide consistency across all sites, with a safe, modern and sustainable work environment that meets current and anticipated future requirements.

The committee observed various World War II-type warehouses that were not built for the purposes they presently serve. These facilities impinge on Defence's ability to efficiently store and maintain items. The warehouses are also difficult to heat, cool and ventilate effectively, and require workarounds to meet workplace health and safety requirements. The committee is satisfied that consolidating and updating facilities will prove beneficial to the provision of logistic support for Defence, and recommends that the project proceed.

I now move to the two Defence Housing Australia inquiries. Defence Housing Australia, or DHA, is contracted to manage on-base housing for Defence at Larrakeyah Barracks in Darwin and RAAF Base Tindal at Katherine in the Northern Territory. The two inquiries dealt with upgrades to on-base housing at these bases. DHA plans to upgrade 48 dwellings in the Larrakeyah Barracks residential precinct in four stages, at a cost of $25 million. DHA also plans to upgrade 131 dwellings on RAAF Base Tindal in two stages at a cost of $57 million.

Housing at the two bases is outdated and no longer meets Defence's minimum standards. Some dwellings at Larrakeyah Barracks, built in the years immediately following Cyclone Tracey, are now uninhabitable. On-base housing at RAAF Base Tindal was largely constructed in the mid-1980s, with only minor upgrades occurring since then. The Defence minimum standards have been updated to reflect changes in community standards and demand. The committee understands that there may be substantial variation amongst houses scheduled for upgrade, and that DHA is taking all appropriate measures to deal with and mitigate the possible effects of the individual nature of those proposed upgrades.

The committee is confident that at both Larrakeyah Barracks and RAAF Base Tindal the proposed upgrades provide better value for money than demolition and construction of new houses. This was something the committee satisfied itself on beyond reasonable doubt. It is more expensive to do some of the work in the Northern Territory. Further, the committee is satisfied that the costs for the project are in line with what would be expected in the Northern Territory. The committee recommends that the two housing upgrade projects proceed.
The last inquiry I address today concerns the proposed new National Archives preservation facility, and refurbishment of the existing facility for the National Archives of Australia at Mitchell in the ACT. The committee defers making a decision on the Mitchell refurbishment aspect of the referral at this time, as negotiations with the landlord are not due to commence until 2015. This component of the referral is undeveloped, premature and may not proceed as proposed. The committee expects the Mitchell refurbishment project to be re-referred at an appropriate time.

The committee recognises the legislative responsibility to store archives from Australian government agencies, and finds that there is a vital need for additional storage space for the National Archives of Australia. The committee was disappointed to learn that the scope of the project is limited to a functional design brief. Typically, projects that are referred to the committee for approval are at a point where a preliminary or sketch design has been prepared and costed. Unfortunately, the committee has determined that this project does not provide value for money for the Commonwealth and cannot proceed in its current form.

The precommitment lease model proposed by the National Archives of Australia provides for the delivery of an integrated fit-out. However, without any capital funding available upfront the cost of the fit-out is amortised over a lengthy lease period. The amortising of the fit-out for the project would see the fit-out costs effectively jumping from $21.3 million to around $52 million, with an unknown quantum of additional lease costs. This substantial cost blow-out could be avoided if the capital for an integrated fit-out were available upfront.

The committee understands that the National Archives of Australia is a small agency with little capital backing; however, this project has been in development for a number of years, providing National Archives of Australia sufficient time to lobby for capital funding for such a significant national project. The cost of the project could be significantly reduced if a larger up-front contribution was made by the Australian government; therefore, the committee recommends that the Australian government provide the necessary up-front funding to National Archives of Australia for the integrated fit-out of the proposed National Archives preservation facility project, thereby providing a superior value-for-money outcome for the Commonwealth. I am confident that National Archives of Australia will re-refer this project to the committee in a more suitable form, and, hopefully, with a favourable funding arrangement provided by the Australian government.

I would like to thank members and senators for their work in relation to these inquiries. In saying that, I wish to thank all witnesses who presented to the committee in person and by way of submission. Again, I want to put on record the good work that the committee members do with this committee. It is a committee that has a lot of work before it, and everybody participates in it really well and actively. I also want to thank the deputy chair, the honourable member for Mallee, for the sterling work that he does and for the support that he provides to me as chair. I thank the committee secretariat, who serve the public wonderfully through the work of the parliament and through this committee. I commend the report to the House.
Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (12:51): I rise to speak on this bill that is now before the House and which seeks to implement the government's third tranche of legislation implementing MySuper, replacing existing default superannuation fund products. The bill contains eight schedules, all dealing with various reforms, to implement MySuper. I can state at the outset that the coalition has deep reservations in relation to schedule 6 of this bill, which deals with the transition to MySuper. We will seek to move amendments to excise this schedule from the bill. If this is not successful, we will seek to move an amendment to improve the schedule.

The coalition also takes a principled stance against the legislative changes contained in schedule 4 of this bill, regarding amendments to the Fair Work Act, so that only funds offering a MySuper product can be included in modern awards and enterprise agreements. The problem the coalition has with these changes is that not every MySuper product will be able to compete freely as a default superannuation fund under modern awards. The coalition has a fundamental objection to the closed-shop approach taken by the government. We will be moving amendments to address this issue. As I said, if we are unsuccessful in improving schedules 4 and 6, we will not support passage of the bill.

I will deal with schedule 1 first. This schedule seeks to ban conflicted remuneration payments from MySuper products. Schedule 1 contains changes which prohibit trustees from deducting any amount from MySuper products that relates to making a commission payment to a financial adviser. The changes contained within schedule 1 also implement restrictions on personal advice that superannuation trustees may charge for collectively.

In addition, schedule 1 prohibits financial advice provided to employers from being recovered through fees charged to members of the fund. The aim is to prevent commissions being charged to employees to cover the costs of an employer seeking financial advice. This schedule of the bill also contains changes to general fee rules which prohibit entry fees and limit exit switching and buy-sell fees for amounts over and above a cost recovery basis.

The parliamentary joint committee inquiry into the bill heard a range of evidence which highlighted concerns that the industry sector had in relation to schedule 1. The Association of Financial Advisers commented that intrafund advice would not serve the best interests of clients, as the advice could be provided without being based on a client’s personal circumstances. The association also expressed concerns that the legislation was inconsistent when distinguishing between complex and basic advice.

The Law Council of Australia raised concerns regarding the potential conflict for trustees arising from the different grandfathering arrangements contained within this bill and the interaction these will have with the government's FoFA changes. The coalition has called on the government to withdraw this bill, to allow further consultation to remedy industry concerns, but the government has not heeded this warning and instead is choosing to pursue the change.
Schedule 2 of the bill that seeks to mandate that MySuper funds includes life and total and permanent disability insurance on an opt-out basis. The changes contained within this schedule also seek to align insurance definitions with conditions of release, to improve consistency with the purpose of the superannuation fund and to ensure payments flow through to members where an insurer pays out to the superannuation fund under the insurance policy. These changes will also prevent a situation where members are paying premiums on several types of insurance coverage but are unable to have payments released to them as they do not meet the superannuation fund's conditions of release. We view this as a sensible change. Schedule 2 also prohibits superannuation funds from self-insuring benefits of the fund, particularly life and total and permanent disability insurance. This ban will not extend to defined benefit funds. Such prohibition will seek to mitigate the risk of any shortfall in insurance benefits funded by other members' balances, which is pretty sensible, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope you are paying attention.

Schedule 3 of this bill provides additional powers to the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, APRA, in order to link further data from superannuation funds holding registrable superannuation entity licences. This will provide a large dataset over time and will ultimately provide policymakers with a more accurate picture of the superannuation sector. For example, it will provide more information on the structure of assets within the superannuation sector and more transparent information on expenses, such as fees being charged to policyholders. The changes contained within this schedule also require APRA to disclose quarterly information on MySuper fees, costs and returns.

The legislation further requires the publication on a website of a product dashboard that will show each MySuper and choice product's investment return target and—importantly—how often this has been achieved, the level of investment risk, a statement on liquidity of the product, and information regarding the average number of fees and other costs related to the product. The legislation also makes readily available a remuneration of superannuation funds' directors and executive officers as well as a breakdown of portfolio holdings. This information should already have been available to members of super funds and we remain sceptical as to whether these measures will actually achieve their aims, following the government's track record on the implementation of other websites. It always gives them a little bit of a shiver down their spines when I mention GroceryWatch and FuelWatch. In fact, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services heard a range of views from industry stakeholders who expressed concern about the workability of this schedule. We the coalition have called on the government to withdraw this schedule from the bill, to allow further consultation to be undertaken, and for the government to hear at least some of the concerns of industry.

The changes contained within schedule 4 of this bill amend the Fair Work Act so that only funds offering MySuper products can be included in modern awards and enterprise agreements. While every default fund has to be a MySuper product, not every MySuper product will be able to compete freely as a default superannuation fund under modern awards. The decision on the selection of default funds under modern awards remains with Fair Work Australia. This process is widely discredited to the point where the
current government recognised this before the last election.

This government made a commitment to instruct the Productivity Commission to design a transparent evidence based and competitive process for the selection of default funds under modern awards. But we all know the difference between what the government says before an election and what it actually does after an election. It took this government until early this year to commission the Productivity Commission to commence the review. But before they handed it down Minister Shorten had already ruled it out. Get a load of that, Madam Deputy Speaker Rishworth. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, would be as appalled as I am at the fact that a minister commissioned a review and then ruled out its findings before the review was even handed down. You of all people, Madam Deputy Speaker, would be appalled at that, and rightly so—as I am.

But it is typical Labor, isn't it? It is typical of the government. That is what they do. They make it up as they go along. Of course, the minister is quite happy protecting his union mates given that he was the head of the Australian Workers Union. He has always given the union dominated super funds a leg up over alternative market based providers. Well, the coalition will seek to move an amendment to the schedule. If our first amendment to remove schedule 6 is unsuccessful, we will not support the bill. The changes contained within schedule 5 seek to allow defined benefit fund schemes to continue to be used by employers for the contributions of employees who do not have a chosen fund. This is an exemption to the general requirement that employers must make contributions to a fund that offers a MySuper product for an employee who does not have a chosen fund. The changes also exclude defined benefit members from being counted in working out whether an employer is a large employer. This will mean that defined benefit employees are exempt from the 500-employee rule when employers are looking to be deemed a large employer.

Schedule 6 of this bill implements provisions that impose requirements for certain existing member balances to be moved into MySuper products, and it also contains a whole new raft of transitional rules. As I stated at the outset, we have deep reservations in relation to this schedule of the bill. We will be seeking to move an amendment to excise the schedule from the bill. Again, if we are unsuccessful, the coalition will then move an amendment that seeks to improve this schedule, along with schedule 4. It aims to restore competition and choice to super.

Schedule 6 amends the SI(S) Act to introduce a new concept of an accrued default amount. The new concept defines those parts of a member’s interest within an existing superannuation fund which in turn must be moved into a MySuper product. These are amounts whereby a member has not exercised an investment choice or amounts held in a default investment option of a fund. This broad definition will mean that fund members who have chosen a specific super fund as well as fund members who have their superannuation invested in the default investment option of that specific superannuation fund will have their balances transferred to a MySuper product unless they choose to opt out. So funds have until 1 July 2017 to transfer all accrued default amounts to a MySuper product unless the member opts out in writing. This will significantly expand the amount that is being transitioned into MySuper, with significant financial consequences for individual fund members, including those who have previously exercised their right to actively choose their own super fund. This will mean that, under
the proposed accrued default amount definition contained within this schedule, all existing default fund workplace accounts, as well as the balances of individuals who have previously exercised choice of funds but who have remained with the default investment option of their chosen fund, will be swept up into the new default MySuper product. Given that this transfer will take place on an opt-out basis, a member who does not choose to opt out will have their superannuation account balance transferred out of its current investment option or fund into a MySuper product chosen by someone else.

The proposal to transfer such a wide range of accounts into MySuper gives rise to a number of consumer protection issues. Many members who have exercised choice will be inappropriately swept up and are likely to find that, post transition, they are now invested in an investment option which they do not want. Such members will also have incurred transaction costs from the selling and rebuying of assets as a result of the transfer, unnecessarily crystallising capital gains.

This also has potential implications for insurance within super, as the MySuper death and total and permanent disability insurance cover is likely to be less than is currently enjoyed by a member of a chosen default fund. Some people who have not been covered within their chosen fund for a long time may not be able to qualify for life insurance or may only qualify on inferior terms given the changes in their personal circumstances since the original cover was taken out.

We will move amendments to excise this schedule from the bill. If this amendment is unsuccessful, we will move another amendment to ensure that a member who has chosen a super fund does not have an accrued default amount and is not moved to a MySuper product. This amendment follows generally the recommendation of the submission by the Law Council of Australia on the exposure draft and is strongly supported by the Financial Services Council, AMP and commercial super funds. As I have stated previously, if our second amendment is also unsuccessful, we will not be supporting this bill.

The final schedule of the bill relates to eligible rollover funds. ERFs have the sole purpose of being a temporary repository for the interest of members who have lost their super accounts. ERFs keep and preserve these balances until the member has been found. Schedule 7 amends the SIS Act so that trustees are required to apply to APRA in order to obtain authorisation to operate an ERF. All balances in an existing ERF will be required to be transferred into an authorised ERF or a fund that offers a MySuper product within 90 days where an application for authorisation has not been made or if APRA has refused authorisation.

I look at this bill and I say, 'Bring on the red tape.' That is what it is—just more red tape, more process—and all with a political purpose from the minister of trying to support some of his mates in the industry. So we will be moving an amendment to excise schedule 6 from the bill. If we are unsuccessful, we will move additional amendments to schedules 4 and 6.

In concluding, I would like to draw the House's attention to the government's failure to have an adequate regulatory impact statement on this legislation. The regulatory impact statement on the second tranche of the MySuper legislation was carried out in September 2011, long before the final version of the legislation was available. Further, a number of matters in various tranches of the legislation were exempted
The Office of Best Practice Regulation noted:

The Prime Minister granted exemptions from the requirements for regulatory impact analysis in relation to the ability of funds to offer tailored MySuper products to employees with more than 500 employees, and extension to the date by which trustees will be required to have transferred the balance—and so on.

So the Prime Minister granted an exemption from any regulatory checks on this legislation. It is typical, really, isn’t it? As my colleague the shadow minister for finance says, it is just a disgrace. The burden that you are placing on business, and small business in particular, is just enormous. So yet again we have a failure of good governance. These concerns that we have were echoed vigorously by the industry, and why not? There is no transparency. There is no up-to-date regulatory impact statement. There is policy on the run. There are amendments on the run.

The bill was referred to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services, but government members forced the committee to undertake a rushed inquiry with only a few hours of hearings. In fact, the original intent of government members was to have no hearing at all, to have an inquiry with no submissions. That is the way Labor operate. They have inquiries with no submissions and they have policy outcomes that fail. But we should not be surprised, because they introduce taxes that hardly raise a dollar but, gee, they know how to waste money.

They also know how to introduce regulation. Labor said it was going to be their commitment to abolish regulation when they were first elected in 2007. My numbers are pretty close, and from what I understand Labor have done a sterling job reducing regulation. They have abolished around 80 regulations since they were elected. The problem is they have introduced 20,000 more, and here you have another whole raft of new regulations. Labor must be so proud of themselves. Labor members must be doing cartwheels at the red tape they are inflicting on small business, on families, on large business. They are wrapping up the entire community like a Christmas parcel with all the red tape that is rolling around. Even Santa would blush at the amount of red tape that has been used in regulations here in Australia just in the last five years. Wouldn’t he envy that when he is wrapping his Christmas presents for all those kiddies out there?

It was only after the coalition stood up that a short inquiry was held, and of course the government dominated committee backed its minister. What a surprise! Therefore, we will proceed with our amendments. As I said, if our amendments are unsuccessful, we will not be a party to this bill and we will oppose the bill in full.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (13:11): I am very pleased to rise in support of the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012. This bill represents the third tranche of legislation which implements the government’s Stronger Super reform initiatives. Of course, the Stronger Super reform initiatives are part of a broader reform agenda for superannuation which has been initiated by the government. The government’s Stronger Super response, following the Cooper review, is one of three limbs to the overall superannuation reform agenda. The other two limbs are the Future of Financial Advice reforms, otherwise known as the FoFA reforms, which were passed by the parliament earlier this year, and the government's Stronger and Fairer Superannuation reforms, including an increase in the superannuation guarantee.
charge from nine per cent to 12 per cent by 1 July 2019, which have also been passed by the parliament.

The bill before the House contains eight schedules and establishes various rules relating to the operation of MySuper products. Before turning to some of the specifics of the bill, I believe it is opportune to reflect on the state of play regarding superannuation and the financial services sector in Australia. Last week APRA released its 2012 super statistics, which revealed that the value of Australia’s superannuation savings is now $1.46 trillion and grew 13 per cent over the year to September 2012. In an ongoing uncertain global economic climate, these figures are indeed phenomenal—double-digit growth rates for the retirement nest eggs of Australians.

The positive industry response to the government’s superannuation reform agenda is also evident in the enhanced products and services now being offered to consumers. One example is the launch by the ANZ last week of its new Smart Choice superannuation product, which has been designed with the government’s MySuper reforms in mind. Together with the ING Living Super launch in September, it is a clear signal that the industry is embracing the MySuper reforms and launching new simple and affordable products accordingly. This reinforces the fact that MySuper products will be low-cost, low-risk superannuation products which provide those members with greater security. These changes will benefit those 80 per cent of members who are in the default strategy in their respective super funds but will not disadvantage those members who wish to take a more active role in managing their superannuation.

In his second reading speech for the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (MySuper Core Provisions) Bill 2011, the minister stated:

… around 60 per cent of Australians do not make active choices in relation to their superannuation.

And this government believes that Australians should not be charged for valet parking when they are catching the train.

… … …

Having created an industry which flourishes on the back of compulsory savings mandated by legislation, it is fair that this industry, which benefits so much from the compulsory saving system in Australia, contributes to higher retirement savings through greater efficiency and lower fees.

These comments go to the heart of the recommendations of the Cooper review. Specifically, in the case of MySuper the final report included a covering letter statement, which read in part:

We have developed ten recommendation packages aimed at benefiting members.

MySuper sits at the heart of our recommendations. It is designed to focus funds on the core purpose for which they exist: optimising retirement incomes for members.

Key recommendation 1.2 in the review highlights of the report states:

MySuper is a simple, well-designed product suitable for the majority of members. The MySuper concept is aimed at lowering overall costs while maintaining a competitive market-based, private sector infrastructure for super. The concept draws on and enhances an existing and well-known product (the default investment option). MySuper takes this product, simplifies it, adds scale, transparency and comparability, all aimed at achieving better member outcomes.

In its recommendations, the Cooper review used the terminology of the superannuation system architecture recognising four types of members. The first two are particularly relevant to the rationale for the MySuper model, namely members who simply want someone else to take care of all their
superannuation services needs for them—MySuper is particularly designed to cater to these members—and members who want to exercise choice over the investment strategies applied to their superannuation balances but want to have their accounts administered for them. These members can elect to be in the choice segment—although they might decide that a MySuper product meets their needs and elect to have their money invested there—or in a combination of MySuper and choice products.

Recognition of this rationale is not isolated. In a September 2010 speech to the Australian Conference of Economists, Dr David Gruen of Treasury argued that, against the backdrop of increasing evidence from behavioural economics, we can no longer run with the conventional economic wisdom that suggests consumers of financial products are the best judges of their own interests. Market failure does occur and when it does it is appropriate for government to step in. He quoted from the Wallis inquiry final report in 1997, which stated:

For many financial products, consumers lack (and cannot efficiently obtain) the knowledge, experience or judgment required to make informed decisions. This is … a situation where further disclosure, no matter how high quality or comprehensive, cannot overcome market failure.

In these cases, it may be desirable to substitute the opinion of a third party for that of consumers themselves.

Dr Gruen also explained in convincing terms the policy rationale for MySuper and the initiatives contained in this bill. He said:

… a key driving principle behind MySuper is that, for those people who do not actively choose an option for their superannuation savings, we want public policy to mandate a default option with carefully designed features that we judge will promote the wellbeing of those who use this option.

Crucially, this mandated default option is not imposed on anyone. Freedom of choice is a central feature of the choice architecture model that underpins the MySuper proposal. Actively engaged people can choose a MySuper default option, or they can choose from a potentially wide array of alternative ‘choice’ options.

The evidence is that around 80 per cent of members of superannuation funds in Australia are invested in the default option in a super fund chosen by their employer or an award. Of that 80 per cent, anecdotal evidence suggests around 20 per cent explicitly choose the default option, with the rest making no active choice.

Turning to some of the specifics of the bill, I would like to highlight a selection in the time available to me. Schedule 3 addresses the collection and disclosure of information. It implements new data collection and publication powers for APRA in relation to superannuation and imposes new disclosure obligations on trustees, including publishing their full portfolio holdings and a product dashboard on their website. This provision improves transparency by expanding the coverage of APRA data collection, ensuring the publication of data on MySuper products and improving disclosure for superannuation. This is a direct result of the Cooper review’s final report, which stated:

Transparency and comparability are critical to the efficiency and operation of a market-based savings system, even where participation is compulsory. The Panel believes that there is presently a lack of transparency, comparability and, ultimately, accountability in the Australian superannuation system that can only be effectively improved through targeted and proportionate regulation.

The provisions in this bill will rectify this issue of a lack of transparency in the Australian superannuation system by expanding APRA’s role in the collection and publication of data in superannuation entities. As outlined by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and
Financial Services in its inquiry into the bill, this data will allow members, employers, the industry and other stakeholders with information to compare the performance of superannuation products, enhancing the accountability of trustees to their members.

There is a requirement for funds to disclose their full portfolio holdings. The rationale for this provision, similar to what I have discussed, is that superannuation fund trustees should be aware of what they invest members' savings in, and, given that superannuation is a compulsory system, members should have access to this information. However, the government has indicated that it will consider whether to extend portfolio holdings disclosure requirements to managed investment schemes, again as recommended by a PJC inquiry, this time into the collapse of Trio.

On accrued default amounts, the government has determined to define accrued default amounts broadly. The rationale here is that this will allow funds to convert their default investment option to a MySuper product rather than having to determine the status of every member. Importantly, this is consistent with the recommendations of the Cooper review. Members will be notified before a transfer occurs and will have the right to opt out. Therefore, no member is forced to transfer if they do not want to. Trustees will have up to four years to communicate with members about their options. Therefore, this approach ensures that all members that need to be protected are transferred to a MySuper product and any members who wish to make their own choice are free to do so.

There is the issue—and it is often said—that, if MySuper is about the disengaged, why should members who have chosen a fund be moved to MySuper? The important point to note here, as I have set out in the evidence and opinions from the Cooper review, Treasury and the industry itself, is that MySuper is not just about disengaged members. The Cooper review recommended that default investment options should be subject to heightened duties and specific rules. The review did not differentiate between how members were placed in a default investment option; rather, it recommended that all members in the default investment option should be within MySuper. The review noted that members would be placed in MySuper by default and that members would also be free to choose MySuper if they wanted a simple and low-cost product. Members who have made an investment choice in the past should not be excluded from being in a MySuper product in the future.

Why should members who have selected the default investment option be moved to a MySuper product? Again, the Cooper review recommended that members currently in default investment options should be placed in MySuper products. Some members who choose the default investment option simply want the trustee to make investment decisions for them. As the trustee will be responsible for the investment decisions in MySuper, these members should be moved to a MySuper product. Members who want to remain in the default investment option will be able to opt out.

Some of those opposite have argued that there has not been enough consultation on MySuper. Whilst these views are clearly misguided, we should not have high expectations in this regard following some of the mistruths and inaccuracy being peddled by some of those opposite. There has been extensive consultation with industry in relation to the MySuper reform initiatives. The Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees, a peak industry body in the superannuation sector, told a recent PJC
inquiry into the bill that there had been a 'significant and extensive' consultation process over a period of 'about 20 months' dating back to the start of 2011.

The MySuper reforms are complemented by the SuperStream initiatives, which are designed to clean up the back office administrative elements of the superannuation industry. Treasury's regulatory impact statement on Stronger Super implementation in September 2011 described the SuperStream initiatives as designed to 'improve the productivity of the superannuation system and make the system easier to use'.

The benefits which will result from the implementation of the SuperStream and MySuper reforms are many and will touch members and industry participants alike. Fund trustees will be relieved of administrative inefficiencies which distract them from their duties to members, and members will benefit from greater confidence in the superannuation industry. Treasury estimates that the annual savings resulting from SuperStream and MySuper will amount to $1.55 billion in the short term and $2.7 billion in the long term and that the average member will see an increase to their final superannuation balance of $40,000. These are impressive developments that the government can indeed be proud of on behalf of all members of the Australian public, and I am delighted to be able to extend my support to such great initiatives.

There are several benefits associated with this bill. In the time available to me, I have sought to highlight some of them. With the passage of this bill, it is evident that many working Australians will receive a very tangible benefit from the measures implemented by this bill. These actions are also a genuine reminder of this government's continued commitment to policy delivery and achieving its vision for the future of Australia. This bill is a genuine illustration of this government's commitment to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Australian superannuation system. I urge all members to support this bill.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (13:25): I rise today to speak on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012, which is currently before the House. As members on this side of the House are aware, the coalition have always been consistent in supporting changes to superannuation in an effort to make the system more efficient, transparent and competitive, with the ultimate objective being to improve the value for super fund members. We have come to this House on regular occasions supporting bills that have come before the House. We get tagged with 'constant negativity', but the reality is—from the advice of the Parliamentary Library—that to date we have supported 87.3 per cent of the legislation that has come before us. We have supported 87.3 per cent, so I am perplexed as to where anyone could say that we were not cooperating.

On this particular bill, I am disappointed and appalled at the apparent lack of adequate scrutiny of the bill by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services because this Labor government has once again rushed an inquiry. The bill is more than 100 pages long and makes fundamental and controversial changes to Australia's superannuation retirement system. Witnesses had a very limited time to make submissions. The Superannuation Committee of the Law Council of Australia—this eminent body—stated:

It is not possible to prepare a well-reasoned and thought-through submission in a week. For the trustee obligations bill the submission timetable was shorter than the period within which the
committee was meant to release its report. I suppose people have a lack of confidence in the system given this timing.

A previous speaker mentioned that we had been spreading mistruths and misinformation about the time frame allowed. Well, there you have it now on the record: the Superannuation Committee of the Law Council of Australia stated that there was not enough time. Australian public, you be the judge. When you talk about peddling mistruths and misinformation, nothing can ever beat the clanger 'There will be no carbon tax under a government I lead' when it comes to this government spreading mistruths and misinformation.

This is extremely concerning, and I am sure constituents in my electorate of Wright will feel much the same way about it. Remember when we first came to this House? The Prime Minister said, 'We need to open up the blinds and let the sunlight in, let the transparency of this place be divulged.' I wondered where that phrase 'let the sunlight in' came from. I was watching an episode of Yes, Minister, the UK political comic show, the other day and the 'Prime Minister', Jim Hacker, said the very words: 'Open the windows and let the fresh air in.' This is comical, and you can draw parallels from Yes, Minister.

The bill is the third slice of legislation following the recommendations made by the Cooper review, which we are all aware was constructed with the aim of introducing a new, low-cost superannuation product known as MySuper to replace existing default superannuation products. The bill contains a number of what many Australians would deem to be miniscule changes. However, each one of these changes is crucially important. That is why I am proud to represent the people of Wright—because I want to make sure that we get this bill right.

The first part of the bill that I am talking about today legislates to ban conflicting remuneration and entry fees and limits other fees to cost recovery. Under this schedule, a superannuation fund that wishes to offer a MySuper product may not charge members of a MySuper product a fee that relates to a payment of conflicted remuneration. This prohibits the trustee from deducting any amount from a MySuper product that relates to making a commission payment to a financial adviser. And while performance based fees may still be paid to an investment manager in relation to assets of a fund that are attributable to a MySuper product, the trustee must demonstrate that the arrangement promotes the financial interest of MySuper members. This is where my concerns start. To demonstrate this concern, I quote from the Association of Financial Advisers, who stated that intrafund advice will not serve the best interests of clients. They go on to say:

... the payment for personal advice out of an administration fee is a less-than-transparent mechanism and also serves to detrimentally impact the perceived value of any advice that people get. Anything you get for free you do not properly value, and if you can get it for what appears to be free from your superannuation fund then why would you go to a financial advisor and pay for it?

These concerns are very real and indicative of the inadequate examination by the committee. I am appalled that in 2012 we continue to have to address matters such as this.

The next section of this bill looks at new data collection and the publication powers of APRA and requirements for product dashboards and portfolio disclosure. A range of concerns were raised in the inquiry about the practicality of the product dashboard. As stated by the Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees, there is clear
potential for misleading information being supplied on the product dashboard—a real concern. The only consolation I have is that members of the committee have recognised that the legislation lacks clarity about what is required by the dashboard and are recommending greater certainty for industry participants regarding this measure. Unfortunately the recommendation is of little value, as it merely calls for APRA to conduct further consultation with industry; it does not call for any real change to the legislation. I concur with my colleagues in recommending that schedules 4 and 6 of this bill be amended to improve the structure of choice for members moving moneys, in view of the evidence that across many different sectors of the superannuation industry there is strong dissatisfaction about the practical workability of the product dashboard provisions set out in schedules 4 and 6.

The next section of this bill amends the Fair Work Act to ensure a MySuper product can be nominated in a modern award or enterprise agreement. To cut straight to the point of the issue, while every default fund has to be a MySuper product, not every MySuper product will be able to compete freely as a default superannuation fund under modern awards. As a result, the decision on which funds are selected as default funds under modern awards remains therefore with Fair Work Australia through the current widely discredited process.

Even the government had to recognise before the last election that the current process, which heavily and inappropriately favours union dominated industry superannuation funds, is not open, transparent and competitive.

It is appalling that the government of this country admits that their process operates in this manner. I question this, as any normal member of a superannuation fund should: if this system does not perform to standard then it is the member who will suffer, because their money—the money which they are counting on to support them in their retirement—will go towards administration. With this in mind I implore the parliament to use this opportunity to ensure the introduction of genuine competition in the default superannuation fund market by moving relevant amendments to this bill. It is imperative that employers be given the option to select any MySuper product as a default fund for employees who have not chosen a fund. Doing so would ensure genuine choice and competition in addition to assisting to maximise value for employees who end up in a default superannuation fund.

The final aspect of this bill that I want to speak about today is the requirement for existing member balances to be transferred to MySuper products, and the relevant transitional rules. This is a fairly extensive schedule, so I will keep my comments brief. Firstly, the bill casts a very wide net as to which existing member balances held in existing superannuation funds will be required to be transferred into a MySuper product. This means that in many cases members who have exercised a choice will have that choice overridden. Put another way, under the drafting, the government has not distinguished between default and personal—non-default—funds.

The second point I want to make relating to this schedule regards the 'opt-out' mechanism. Funds have until 1 July 2017 to transfer all accrued default amounts to a MySuper product unless the member opts out in writing. By that date the trustee of a fund must contact all members having accrued default amounts and notify them of the proposed transfer of those amounts into a MySuper product. If the member does not opt out by the end of a 90-day period, the trustee is obliged to go ahead and carry out
the transfer. This means that, without members being aware that this is happening, the nature of their superannuation product is going to change—and in a material number of cases that change will be adverse to members’ interests.

This action by the government is not only somewhat extraordinary; I believe it is also somewhat deceitful. Furthermore, it is disappointing that a government can choose to set such an example to the wider Australian business community. I can only hope that business owners will not take this lead in the way they conduct their own businesses. To finish on this point, I concur with my coalition colleagues in recommending that an amendment be moved to the bill to provide that any amount in respect of which a member has made an active choice is not an accrued default amount and should not be moved to a MySuper product, either within or outside their chosen fund.

In conclusion, it is very easy to see that this government has yet again done the Australian people over. The people of my electorate of Wright, whom I serve with honesty and integrity, deserve significantly better. The government has made every effort to deceive the Australian people through this bill. I conclude with the recommendations of my coalition colleagues. I strongly encourage those on the other side of the House to think carefully about the Australian people who will be affected by this legislation and what it means to them. I do not want the mums and dads and the hardworking business owners of my community to be left behind—everyday Australians who work hard to ensure they have a plan for the future. This is what will happen if we do not make every effort to work together for effective policy.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (13:38): This is the third tranche of legislation as a part of the government’s Stronger and Fairer Superannuation reforms. It includes seven key elements, the first being a ban on conflicted remuneration fees—effectively commissions for MySuper products. It provides an opt-out provision—that is, insurance in the form of life insurance and total and permanent disability insurance should be provided; however, MySuper Fund members can opt out of the provision of such insurance. It increases the disclosure obligations on trustees in relation to their portfolio holdings. It also provides for default placement via awards and collective agreements—that is, when members are placed by default into a superannuation fund it must be a MySuper superannuation fund. It makes it quite clear that defined benefit funds are excluded from these arrangements. It provides for the streamlining of transfer of
pre-approved funds into MySuper accounts and it provides better powers for APRA to scrutinise eligible rollover funds.

My colleague the member for Greenway has gone through the background to these provisions in quite some detail. I do not intend in the time I have available to go back over that ground, but I would like to make some observations about another part of the transparency regime of our financial sector—and by that I mean our ratings agencies. Credit ratings play an important role in the Australian prudential regulatory framework. Ratings agencies are companies that charge fees to provide ratings on financial products and organisations. The work of ratings agencies helps to assess financial products. Ratings agencies, including Moody’s, Standard & Poor’s and Fitch, wield enormous financial power, yet they are essentially unregulated. Since the global financial crisis, the work of ratings agencies has come under increased scrutiny. I believe that this scrutiny is appropriate and in fact that there could be, and should be, more done in this area. There is no doubt that many investors, not just in Australia but in the United States and elsewhere, are still feeling the consequences of the global financial crisis and the collapse of investment institutions like Lehman Brothers.

Ratings agencies played a significant role in this crisis and contributed to the housing bubble in the United States by giving risky mortgage backed securities top ratings and underestimating the risk of default and disclosure. While the opinion of these ratings agencies is just that—an opinion—in practice the role these agencies play in financial markets is crucial. This is largely a user-pays system in which the ratings agencies receive income from the fees paid by those who issue certain financial products. I believe that there is a lack of transparency and often conflict-of-interest issues in this system that currently are not adequately addressed by regulation.

There can be no denying that there are many investor victims in Australia and globally because of their reliance on the work of ratings agencies. There have been two recent Federal Court cases that touch on this situation. Earlier this month the Federal Court made a landmark decision with regard to the use of Standard & Poor's AAA ratings in the lead-up to the global financial crisis by finding that the ratings agency was in part liable for the advice and distribution of complex financial products to 13 New South Wales councils. This recent decision came in the wake of an earlier ruling in October—again in the Federal Court—which found the Australian arm of a failed US institution, Lehman Brothers, liable for investment advice to councils regarding other complex financial institutions. I know about this very well, because one council in my electorate, the Wingecarribee Council, lost somewhere in the order of $30 million.

It is good news that the Federal Court made a decision in this case; it means that the council affected will recover some of the $30 million loss. While this decision will no doubt be appealed, in the meantime it is important to note some of the findings in this decision. The Federal Court judge found that S&P’s decision to give a AAA rating to the financial product was 'misleading and deceptive' and involved 'negligent misrepresentation'. As the judge said:

The very purpose of a rating is to provide investors with independent information by persons expert in assessing the creditworthiness of an investment so that, by a simple system of letters, an investor can know and compare the creditworthiness of investments.

This is an issue that goes not just to financial products but to governments at the federal and state level as well. Many local
government bodies and their ratepayers were essentially defrauded through false and misleading ratings assurances. I understand that it is likely that, following this decision, we will see more court cases.

I raise these issues in parliament today because I believe the time has come for the Australian parliament to play its part in applying proper scrutiny to these ratings agencies and companies—just as we quite rightly bring legislation before this House to ensure that members who are investing their money in superannuation products do so with the knowledge that those products are well-managed and that they have some control, knowledge and information about not only the superannuation fund but also the trustees of those funds and the whereabouts of those investments. That is because Australia's financial system depends on each player adhering to best practice and the highest standards of prudential rigour. I believe that more action needs to be taken in this parliament not only to improve the operation of our superannuation system but also to ensure that the work of credit rating agencies is done within an environment that is properly looking at the enormous responsibility that they have in pricing and in rating the creditworthiness of financial products and government bodies as well. I commend the legislation to the House.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Millennium Development Goals

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong) (13:45): I rise to express my support for the Millennium Development Goals, which set important targets for poverty reduction by the year 2015. While we as Australians enjoy access to fresh food, clean water and quality health and education services, many in the world do not. In fact, 2½ billion people are denied proper sanitation, 7.6 million children die before their fifth birthday, and 287,000 women lose their life in childbirth due to preventable causes. That is why the Millennium Development Goals make a difference—they focus the international community's attention on the challenge ahead.

The Millennium Development Goals include: halving the number of people living on less than $1 a day; the provision of universal primary education; empowering women and achieving gender equality; cutting the child mortality rate by two-thirds; reducing the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters; reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other fatal diseases; promoting environmental sustainability and biodiversity; and building a global partnership for development.

I am proud that thousands of people in the Kooyong area are doing their part. Many have joined the Micah Challenge, and many churches—such as Hartwell Church of Christ, Hawthorn West Baptist Church, Hawthorn's Immaculate Conception Church, St John's Anglican Church Camberwell, St Hilary's in Kew and St Columb's in Hawthorn—have seen their congregations deeply engaged.

But there is no time to waste. As we approach the Christmas period, when many Australians will enjoy a good meal with their families, we should spare a thought for those millions of people around the world less fortunate than ourselves.

Premature Birth Awareness

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (13:46): I rise to mention world premie day on 17 November and premature birth awareness month and to highlight the experience of my constituent Mr Samuel Turner of Seven Hills.

Each year 13 million babies around the world are born too soon. Approximately
23,000 of these babies are born in Australia. The rate of pre-term birth is increasing, yet the general public knows little about the prevention of pre-term birth and the problems and risks involved in the development of a pre-term infant. Pre-term birth—which is also known as premature birth and which means the birth of a baby before 37 weeks gestation—is the second most common cause of newborn death globally.

Samuel was born premature at 27 weeks and weighed only 850 grams. He is now 19 years old and suffers chronic lung disease, severe asthma and some intellectual disabilities. Samuel made it clear to me that some children who are born premature do suffer physical and intellectual problems—including Asperger's syndrome, autism and respiratory and cardiovascular issues—but that premature birth does not necessarily mean death and that people born prematurely do not necessarily live a less fulfilling life than other people.

As I am a new mother, these issues have come into particularly sharp focus for me, and I believe that more attention should be given to the condition of pre-term births to my attention. Samuel is absolutely right that not only governments but also individuals need to support the cause of premature baby awareness through support to mothers, parents and families and for neonatal intensive care units.

**Stenlake, Mr Tim**

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (13:47): I rise today to acknowledge a young athlete in my electorate of Ryan who recently took on the world's best at the ICF Canoe Marathon World Championships in Rome, where he placed an impressive 21st in the under-23 K1 division.

Tim Stenlake first took up kayaking as a way to stay fit. After taking out second place in his first race, which was at the under-14s in the Queensland School Canoe Marathon Championships, he was hooked. Tim has been training ever since, and his dedication resulted in his making it to the Australian team. With his family, friends and local community, I attended a neighbourhood fund-raising sausage sizzle for Tim. From this event, coupled with generous donations, he was able to raise $2,500 to help with his trip to Rome.

Tim says that kayaking has allowed him to fuel his competitive spirit and to chase his dream of one day representing Australia at the Olympics. He is: a member of the 2012 Australian Maritime team; the under 23 Australian champion; the state 500-metre and 1,000-metre champion; the six kilometre hare & hounds record holder; the Brunswick Marathon record holder; and the winner of three Northern Marathon Series.

Tim believes that representing Australia is an honour which only few people get to experience, and he will cherish it as a first-time Australian representative. I wish him well in his future endeavours.

**Throsby Electorate: Nan Tien Temple**

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (13:49): On the weekend I had the honour of representing the Prime Minister at the official 'piling and blessing' ceremony at the Nan Tien Buddhist temple and new university site in Berkeley, in my electorate of Throsby. The Nan Tien Temple, which is also known as 'Southern Paradise', is the largest Buddhist temple in the southern hemisphere. Over the past 10 years, the Nan Tien Temple has become a favourite venue for religious study groups, school excursions and community group outings.

The recent ceremony signalled the beginning of the first stage of a new...
education campus which is to be built at the temple and which will expand the temple's religious education and business education services and cater for approximately 3,000 students from around Australia and the world. The new campus will include an art gallery, a library, an auditorium, teaching areas, a meditation hall and a roof garden. It will offer undergraduate and postgraduate courses grounded in Buddhist wisdom and values.

It is great to see that the land on which the temple stands and which was formerly an eyesore is now home to a magnificent temple that offers a beautiful and peaceful sanctuary to people from all walks of life. It also functions as one of Wollongong's most popular tourist attractions. I welcome the investment that the Nan Tien Temple is putting into religious and cultural education in the region. This investment will become increasingly important as we move into the Asian century.

Queensland Liberal National Party
Senate Preselection

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (13:50): On the weekend just past in Queensland, the Liberal National Party preselection was held for our Queensland Senate team. In a very democratic process, 300 preselectors rolled up and elected six fine candidates.

I am proud to announce that No. 1 on our Senate ticket is Ian Macdonald, the incumbent senator who has made an enormous contribution in the other place and to the party as a whole. No. 2 on the ticket is James McGrath, who played an integral role in Queensland by heading up the state campaign. James will bring value and commitment to the team. Matt Canavan is No. 3 on the ticket. He is currently serving as Chief of Staff to Senator Barnaby Joyce. Matt worked previously as an economist at the Productivity Commission and has a wealth of knowledge. David Goodwin, who is the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland and an outstanding performer, is No. 4 on the ticket. No. 5 on the ticket is Theresa Craig. She is a Canadian by birth and new to Australia. She has a science background specialising in agriculture. Amanda Stoker, an up-and-coming barrister, is No. 6 on the ticket. All these candidates are of outstanding quality.

We had the difficulty of trying to choose from 16 different candidates up there vying for that Senate position, which shows the strength of commitment of Queenslanders. In the room with our 300 preselectors we had over 7,000 or 7,500 years of experience from our membership, which chose that wonderful team.

Bass Electorate: Brooks High School

Mr LYONS (Bass) (13:52): Recently I visited Brooks High School in Launceston to view a performance of the grade 9/10 production, The Pledge. I must say I was totally blown away by both the talent and the professionalism shown by the students involved. The production was created with the intention of drawing attention to the widespread problem of bullying, including the influence of social media and technology on bullying in the 21st century. The production comprised singing, audio and visual media, dance, drama and live music. It was wonderful to see so many talented young people working together to raise awareness of such an important issue.

The Pledge was a very real and emotive representation of the impact bullying can have, not only on an individual but also on the wider community. I feel certain that with the excellent efforts of young people, such as the students at Brooks High School, public awareness of bullying will improve and help to create a safer, more inclusive society for everyone.
Once again, I congratulate the students and teachers at Brooks High School involved with this important production. It was a pleasure to watch and it conveyed a message that will raise awareness of the real impacts of bullying, both in schools and within the wider community.

Reeve, Mr Cliff

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (13:53): I want to recognise the work done by RadioWest announcer Cliff Reeve, and his breakfast show co-hosts, for people affected by cancer, as well as seriously ill children in Bunbury and the South-West. Cliff has been a long-term driver of Give Me 5 for Kids, raising money for Princess Margaret Hospital for Children through a rubber ducky race and quiz nights in Bunbury and Busselton. Cliff has been a volunteer at Relay for Life for years. Then, of course, there is Movember, the aim of which is to raise vital funds and awareness for men’s health, specifically prostate cancer and male mental health.

Cliff has a new partner, Dougie, on his programme Wake Up with Cliff and Dougie. Cliff has brought Dougie on board with volunteering for the Bunbury Relay for Life event and both Cliff and Dougie have grown what I would have to say are less-than-impressive moustaches to raise money for cancer through the Movember approach.

For many reasons Cliff and Dougie are a very important part of life in the small communities and rural and regional areas in and around the South-West. They have done some of their best work in the area of cancer and for children who are seriously ill. Cliff has had a great commitment to Give Me 5 for Kids. In this area he has done an enormous power of work. The power of radio in getting out to people in our community cannot be underestimated.

I commend Cliff Reeve and I commend Dougie for coming on board and helping Cliff in his endeavours.

ACT Walking for Pleasure

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:55): Earlier this year ACT Walking for Pleasure celebrated its 25th anniversary. The group initially received financial assistance from the government as part of the Life Be In It campaign, but it very quickly became an independent non-profit organisation.

Over the past 25 years the group has conducted over 6,200 walks, bringing much physical and social enjoyment to many people. These walks have ranged far and wide in Canberra and its surrounding regions, though they also venture further into NSW, on either one-day excursions or longer expeditions. Some of these walks are short, others involve major bushwalks. About 70 walks are offered, covering urban paths and by-ways, Canberra nature parks, river corridors, ACT forests, Canberra urban parks, and national parks in the ACT and neighbouring NSW.

As a regular walker I share the aims of the group, which are to encourage walking as an activity for the promotion of health and to encourage exercise on a regular basis for fitness, for social interaction and for wellbeing. Walking for Pleasure also promotes the interests of the wider Canberra community. The group assists ACT Health clients who have mental or physical disabilities, and if the walks are not suitable they refer them on to groups who offer walks closer to their home area or more suited to their particular disability.

ACT Walking for Pleasure most definitely has its priorities right. Before the walks they begin by having a conversation on where they will go for coffee afterwards. This extra social contact is not just good for physical
and mental health, it is also good for the local economy.

**Electorate of Herbert: Schools**

**Mr EWEN JONES** (Herbert) (13:56): I rise to speak about the school presentation evenings in Townsville that come about at the end of every year. One of the joys of being a local member is to attend as many of the school presentation evenings and speech nights as you possibly can. It is a great way of showing support for your constituency. A lot of them were held in our last week of sittings here, but I was able to get to Cathedral School last week and St Patrick's on the weekend.

Cathedral School's event was the junior school graduation and saw the grade 6 students get up—from the orchestra, to the wind ensemble, to having the whole school on stage doing a song that I have no idea what it was about. They all had actions and dance moves far beyond my boarding school two-step, with the biting of the bottom lip. They were a joy to all of the parents.

Most importantly, the school was able to get their whole presentation evening start on time at 6.30 and they were out of there by 8.30. It was a spectacularly run evening, although the school principal, Mr Ian Gamack, and the junior school principal, Mr Paul Taylor, both used the opportunity to drop a large load onto their local federal member. When Cathedral School was in Canberra I happened to get punted out of question time that day, and they used me as an example of what not to do.

So, to all the schools in Townsville I had the opportunity to visit, I thank you so much.

**Banks, Mr Gary AO**

**Dr LEIGH** (Fraser) (13:58): Canberra economist Gary Banks AO is stepping down after 14 years of service to the Productivity Commission. He was the Productivity Commission's inaugural chairman and he was the executive commissioner of its predecessor, the Industry Commission.

The Productivity Commission and its predecessor bodies have done important work for major Labor reforms, whether that was tariff reforms in the 1970s or competition reform in the 1990s. During Mr Banks's term as chairman, the Productivity Commission has brought down important work on aged care policy, the National Disability Insurance Scheme and carbon pricing. The Productivity Commission has also done critically important work on school reform and on reporting Indigenous disadvantage.

Of course, the Productivity Commission has clashed with governments. Under the Howard government the commission pointed to widespread claims of inefficiency and waste in health care. They criticised the lack of a uniform national approach in forestry, fisheries and waste disposal. They spoke about the inefficiency of stamp duty and the need for a carbon price. And it has to be said that the Productivity Commission has on occasion said things with which this government has disagreed. That is in the tradition of frank and fearless advice, a tradition that Gary Banks upholds well. I wish him the best in his new work heading up the Australia and New Zealand School of Government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! It being 2 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may resume at a later hour.

**BUSINESS**

**Days and Hours of Meeting**

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:00): by leave—I move:
That the time and arrangements for the sitting tomorrow, Tuesday, 27 November 2012, be as follows:

(1) The House, at its rising, adjourn until tomorrow at 11 a.m.;
(2) during the period from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. any division on a question called for in the House, other than on a motion moved by a Minister during this period, shall stand deferred until the conclusion of the discussion of a matter of public importance;
(3) during the period from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. if any member draws the attention of the Speaker to the state of the House, the Speaker shall announce that she will count the House at the conclusion of the discussion of a matter of public importance, if the Member then so desires; and
(4) any variation to this arrangement to be made only by a motion moved by a Minister.

I thank the Manager of Opposition Business.

Both of us are committed to doing what we can to ensure that people can leave the parliament at the end of this week in an orderly fashion—hence the arrangements tomorrow. I thank the opposition for their cooperation.

Question agreed to.

CONDOLENCES

Riordan, Hon. Joseph Martin, AO

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister)

(14:01): I move:

That the House express its deep regret at the death on 19 November 2012, of the Honourable Joseph Martin (Joe) Riordan AO, a former Minister and Member of this House for the Division of Phillip from 1972 to 1975, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

A decade ago, Alan Ramsey spoke of the Whitlam cabinet as 'a dwindling brotherhood'. Over the years, we have farewelled so many—Lionel Murphy, Fred Daly, Jim Cairns, Kim Beazley Sr and Reg Bishop to name a few. In the term of this parliament, it has been our sad duty to say goodbye to Ken Wriedt and Lionel Bowen. Now, with Joe Riordan's passing, the brotherhood grows even smaller. I ask the whole House to join me in honouring one of our own.

It is part of Australian political folklore to designate bellwether seats, those electorates whose capture or loss signal a change of government and a shift in the nation's sentiment. The electorate of Phillip, now abolished, in Sydney's eastern suburbs was one of those seats. In 1972, a 42-year-old unionist called Joe Riordan wrested the seat from Bill Aston, the Liberal Speaker of the House. The Whitlam government had arrived.

Joe Riordan was a member of this House for just three years, his brief ministerial career terminated by the action of his friend John Kerr and his parliamentary career terminated by the disillusioned voters of Phillip six weeks later. Many years later, in 1995, Joe told a conference on the dismissal about that Remembrance Day afternoon:

I went into the House of Representatives. Frank Crean was there speaking. I thought I'd go in and just sit behind him. I took a bundle of letters waiting to be signed and I was signing the letters listening to Frank making his speech to the Parliament. And there was a thump on the seat beside me and 'Himself' appears and he said, "Don't sign any more letters. You're no longer a minister".

All those hopes gone at the stroke of a vice-regal pen.

But those three years of service had a purpose as well as spectacular highs and lows. Joe Riordan once said of the Whitlam government that 'it dared to challenge.' It dared to challenge complacency and injustice. It dared to imagine a more vibrant and open Australia beyond the insularity of the Menzies era. Joe Riordan was one of
those who paid a high price for the Whitlam government's daring.

Joe came to elected public office after a remarkable two-decade contribution to the Labor movement and he was to make an equally outstanding contribution to the cause of industrial fairness in the three years after he left politics. Joe's place in the union movement began with the Federated Clerks' Union. He was elected assistant secretary of the New South Wales branch at just 22 and headed that union federally from 1958 until his election to parliament in 1972. They were bitter, contentious years in our national life. As a loyal right-winger, Joe no doubt saw himself on the side of the angels. But he also knew that, in the end, the only way was to stick with the Labor Party—and so he did.

As a loyal unionist and loyal Catholic, Joe had a strong and practical sense of social justice. His view was a simple one and it is shared by everyone on this side of the House: the workforce consists of human persons who are entitled to be treated with dignity and proper respect. Driven by those principles, Joe served in many capacities in the 30 years after his time in politics. Those roles included head of the New South Wales Department of Industrial Relations, Senior Deputy President of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, chairman of WorkSafe Australia, chairman of the WorkCover Authority of New South Wales and chair of the New South Wales Ethical Clothing Trades Council. His constant preoccupation throughout those decades was the rights of working people, especially industrial safety, and the wellbeing of those in the textile, footwear and clothing industry who suffered such exploitation. These workers had a great friend in Joe Riordan—he spoke for them, he delivered change for them, and they are among the many who mourn his death.

On this coming Sunday, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the election of the Whitlam government. Joe did not quite make it, but he will be in our hearts as we do. He was born amid the privation of the Depression—an Aussie kid from the inner suburbs of Sydney long before they were trendy. He was educated by the Marist Brothers and did not go to university but rose up, union ticket in his pocket, to be a member of parliament, a minister of the Crown and to hold offices of high public trust for half a century. He did all that with the plain-spoken decency, integrity and constancy of purpose that so characterises his era. That is the generation we are farewelling; that is the brotherhood of which Alan Ramsey spoke, and as they go we are diminished.

On behalf of the government I offer our condolences to Joe's widow, Pat, who he cared for so much during her own long illness, to his six children, to his extended family, to his fellow parishioners and to his many friends. Like them we are proud of Joe's long and full life and saddened by his loss. I commend Joe's memory to the House and to the Australian people.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): I rise to join the Prime Minister in saluting the life and service of Joe Riordan. I feel a certain solidarity with Joe Riordan because before his election to this House he was for many years, as the Prime Minister has pointed out, a senior official of the Federated Clerks' Union—a union that was very dear to many people from those days who are close friends of mine. It was a union that was particularly well respected in those days but, sadly, it has subsequently fallen on much harder times.

As the Prime Minister has said, subsequent to leaving this parliament Joe went on to serve in various capacities in our...
industrial relations system. He was a good man—he was faithful to his party, he was faithful to his nation, he was faithful to his family and he was faithful to his religion. He was a fine representative of a disappearing breed of Labor man and will be much missed.

The SPEAKER: As a mark of respect, I ask all present to signify their approval of the Prime Minister's motion by rising in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

Debate adjourned.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:09): by leave—I move:

That the resumption of the debate on the Prime Minister's motion of condolence in connection with the death of the Hon. Joseph Martin Riordan AO be referred to the Federation Chamber.

Question agreed to.

Courtenay, Mr Bryce, AM

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:10): On indulgence, Madam Speaker, I want to pay tribute to the Australian author Bryce Courtenay, who died of stomach cancer, aged 79, here in Canberra last week. Mr Courtenay took up the pen well into middle age after a successful career in advertising. In a writing life of just 23 years he wrote more than 20 books—amazing—including that modern masterpiece The Power of One. He boasted 12 of the 50 most borrowed books at Australia's public libraries, and it is said that one in three Australian homes has a Bryce Courtenay novel on its shelves. Bryce Courtenay's books were not always valued by the critics and by the literati, but Australians bought and borrowed them in their millions. They were, and I suspect will long remain, regular presents under Christmas trees or Mothers Day or Fathers Day gifts.

Bryce Courtenay worked hard for his success, writing 12 hours a day, six days a week. He gave much to others as a philanthropist and as an ambassador for literacy and reading. Our condolences go to his widow, Christine, to his sons, Brett and Adam, and to all those readers whose loyalty made Bryce Courtenay a household name. He called it a wonderful life, and it truly was.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): I rise to support the words of the Prime Minister. Bryce Courtenay was not born an Australian but he well and truly became one. He was a great ad man and he became one of our best storytellers. He will always be remembered for The Power of One and for his poignant story of the death of his son, April Fool's Day. I join with the Prime Minister on behalf of the coalition in sending our condolences to his wife and his family. The writer dies, but not his words—he has gone, but his spirit lives in his work.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:12): by leave—I move:

That further statements on indulgence on the death of Bryce Courtenay AM be permitted in the Federation Chamber.

Question agreed to.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Prime Minister

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's statement today that she provided legal advice to set up the AWU Workplace Reform Association. I also refer the Prime Minister to the 1996 sworn statement of then AWU head Ian Cambridge
that the AWU did not authorise Wilson or Blewitt to set up the association or open any bank accounts in its name and that it was a breach of union rules. Why did the Prime Minister give legal advice to Wilson and Blewitt on the incorporation of this association when she must have known, as a partner of Slater and Gordon, it was in contravention of union rules?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:13): I have just dealt with this precise question at a press conference which finished at around four or five minutes to two o’clock, so I refer the member for Curtin to the transcript where I dealt with this matter extensively.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Under the standing orders the Prime Minister is required to answer during question time questions on matters that are known about by the general public. If she is not equipped to do so or has some reason for avoiding answering questions in this parliament and thinks journalists are a substitute for members, she does not deserve to be Prime Minister of this country.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has the call and has the right to be heard in silence.

Ms GILLARD: I had one of those ultrasecret things called a press conference—one of those ultrasecret things! That is what you do, isn’t it? You call a press conference in front of the full Canberra press gallery and conduct it for the best part of an hour if you do not want people to know what you have said! Gee, the member for Mackellar is onto something there! I refer the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Melham interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Banks!

Ms GILLARD: to this question, which was put to me during the press conference by Sid Maher of the Australian. I stand by the answer I gave to Mr Maher’s question.

Mr Christensen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has resumed her seat, and one point of order—

Mr Christensen: It is in regards to a comment that was made by the member for Banks—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. I have berated the individual who made the remark. The member for Banks will withdraw.

Mr Melham: Out of deference to you, Madam Speaker, I will—

The SPEAKER: No, just withdraw.

Mr Melham: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Banks.

Economy

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (14:16): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on how the government has delivered a stronger economy and a fairer society over the last five years; and how are we getting on with our plan to build a stronger future?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:16): I thank the member for Canberra for her very important question about the difference that a Labor government is making to Australians and to our nation, including those Australians who live in her electorate right here in Canberra, in the ACT. On Saturday we mark the five-year anniversary of the Rudd government and of the government that I lead. Across those five years of Labor government, we can say we are proud of the achievements that, working with the Australian community, we have
brought to our nation—and I do say very strongly 'working with the Australian community' because when you are looking to deliver profound change, when you are looking to deliver major improvements for Australians, it requires government to act, but it also requires businesses to play their part, unions to play their part and civil society to play its part. I am proud of the way in which we have been able to work together with business, with unions and with civil society for change.

First and foremost, because we are a Labor government we made decisions during the days of the global financial crisis that would keep the maximum number of people in jobs. We have created over 800,000 jobs and we are also ensuring Australians feel the benefits of work by ensuring that there is a tripling of the tax-free threshold and people get to keep the first $18,200 they earn without paying a cent of tax to the taxman.

We are proud that we abolished WorkChoices and we have introduced fairness and decency at work, and we have added to it this year, in this parliament, through better arrangements for those in shipping, better arrangements for truck drivers around the country and better arrangements for building workers, for clothing and trades workers, for public servants who are getting pushed out of work by state Liberal governments and for workers when they lose their jobs in circumstances where their entitlements are not fully paid.

We are also very proud of what we have done to create an opportunity agenda—improving education so people genuinely get a chance at a decent life through having the skills to realise a secure job, or a series of secure jobs, over their working life. We have readied our nation for this time of change in our region in what will be the Asian century. We have delivered major reforms in the environment, including the most recent work of the minister on the Murray-Darling Basin. We have rolled out the National Broadband Network. We have delivered a huge infrastructure package for this nation's future and, proudly, this week we will introduce into the parliament an entitlement for every Australian child to an excellent education and the creation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. That is our positive agenda for 2013.

Prime Minister

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:19): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to her statement today, and to this letter she wrote as a partner of Slater and Gordon to Bruce Wilson in August 1991, in which she provided him with detailed advice on AWU rules on branch offices, union officials and elections. Will the Prime Minister now admit that she was fully aware of AWU rules about the authorisation to set up entities and bank accounts bearing the name of the union and that the AWU Workplace Reform Association breached those union rules?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:20): In answer to the deputy opposition leader's question: I dealt in detail with the circumstances in which I provided legal advice for the incorporation of this association at my marathon press conference in August, and those matters have been gone into again in the press conference that I just conducted, and I stand by those statements. My role in relation to this matter was as a lawyer providing advice to clients based on their instructions to me. I did not incorporate an association; that is for the Registrar of Incorporated Associations to do. I did not operate the association. I was not an office-bearer of it. I did not deal with any transactions associated with any bank accounts the association may or may not
have had. I had no knowledge of those bank accounts.

So, to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I gave legal advice based on client instructions about the incorporation of an association. I say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—and, really, it goes to much of the sleaze and muckraking that the opposition has been engaged in—if she has a real allegation of wrongdoing by me, then put it. I did note last week that, when the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was interviewed on radio—I believe it was Radio National—on three occasions she was unable to articulate what it was that I needed to answer. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has never brought forward a substantiated allegation of wrongdoing by me; neither has the Leader of the Opposition. Once again, this morning he was unable to articulate what questions I should answer. The opposition are doing this today, and I anticipate we will do it for nine or 10 questions, however many are in question time, and there will probably be a motion to add to it.

This is all happening today—and I think the Australian people should clearly understand this—because the Leader of the Opposition is determined to pursue a negative strategy. He had hoped to tear this government down. He had hoped to tear me down. He had hoped to ride into office on the basis of a dishonest fear campaign about carbon pricing. That dishonest fear campaign is running out of political puff and, in those circumstances, into a vacuum, because the opposition has no ideas for the nation's future. All they have left is filth and smear and sleaze, because of their inability to come to the dispatch box and put one idea for the nation's future. As I said at my press conference a little earlier today, these are not John Howard's Liberals; this is an entirely—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will return to the question.

Ms GILLARD: different creature with no ideas about the nation's future.

The SPEAKER: Is the deputy leader of the opposition seeking to table a document?


The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House?

Mr Albanese: No. I table, from the West Australian, an article from 1 December 2007: 'Bishop accused of causing extra suffering over asbestos'.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Mackellar is warned!

Economy

Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (14:23): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the International Monetary Fund's latest annual assessment of Australia? What does this say about the resilience of our economy?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:24): I thank the member for Petrie for that very important question, because there has been a very strong endorsement of the resilience of the Australian economy by the IMF in their annual report—a very comprehensive report on the resilience of the Australian economy. I would just like to quote a few things that the IMF had to say about our economy. They said there was a well-coordinated response to the global financial crisis, and they went on to say:

Five years on, both the economy and the financial sector continue to outperform most of their peers.
The IMF then went on to say, in praising the adept handling of the fallout from the global financial crisis:

... prudent economic management, and strong supervision of the financial sector, has kept Australia on the dwindling list of AAA rated countries.

So what the IMF is saying is that, unlike the rest of the world, the economy here has been very resilient—so much so that we have had 21 years of growth.

We are now the 12th largest economy in the world. We have improved that ranking by three since those over there were last in government. There have been something like 800,000 jobs created in Australia, whilst around the rest of the developed world millions of people have lost their jobs. And we are headed back to surplus, with modest debt. This is a very substantial achievement for Australia and for the Australian people.

Interest rates are now much lower than they were under the Liberal Party. If you have a $300,000 mortgage, you are now saving around $4,500 a year in repayments compared to what occurred when those over there were last in office, when there were interest rate rises—10 in a row.

So the point is that the IMF is pointing to the resilience of the Australian economy.

And because of our good budget management, we have put in place some historic reforms. We have boosted the age pension and introduced paid parental leave; we have tripled the tax-free threshold; we have increased the childcare rebate and we have increased the superannuation guarantee—all designed to make our economy much more resilient. And we put in place the Asian century white paper. These fundamentals are there for everybody to see.

This report from the IMF completely torpedoes the low-rent scaremongering that we hear from the Leader of the Opposition, and from the shadow Treasurer, who talk our economy down every day of the week. We on this side of the House will get on with building on the strength of the Australian economy by putting in place the fundamental reforms that the Prime Minister was talking about before—fundamental reforms when it comes to school improvement and, of course, the national disability scheme. All of these things are important.

We have seen the carbon scare campaign waged by those opposite fade away. And what have we got now? We have got another smear campaign because they do not have any policies.

Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (14:27): Madam Speaker, I rise to ask a supplementary question. The Treasurer has spoken about why a resilient economy is important for delivering the big reforms for the country. Can he outline what this means for people in my electorate?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:27): I thank the member for Petrie for that question. We avoided a recession in this country because of the policies put in place by this government. We avoided the skill destruction and the very high unemployment that has been experienced across so many other developed economies. This has had real benefits for working people, particularly in the electorate of Petrie: tripling the tax-free threshold for 49,000 people in the electorate of Petrie, delivering a boost to super for 44,000 workers in Petrie and delivering tax breaks to 12,300 small businesses in Petrie—all of that opposed by the Liberals opposite—because our approach to the economy is one of good economic management, unlike those opposite who have a $70 billion crater in their budget bottom line, which could only mean, if they were in power, huge cuts to health and
education. Of course, we have seen what they would do if they were there from what Campbell Newman has been doing in Queensland, the leading edge of which is felt in the electorate of Petrie and in the electorate of Lilley by the slashing of aged-care beds at state-run nursing homes. What we are seeing here is a taste of the future if they were in power: taking a sledgehammer to health and education and a sledgehammer to the economy. We on this side of the House will always stand to support jobs and make sure we have decent health and education.

Ms Gambaro: How’s the superclinic going?

The SPEAKER: How’s the member for Brisbane going at observing the standing orders?

Prime Minister

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:29): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to her statement today that she provided legal advice for the incorporation of the AWU Workplace Reform Association. When the Prime Minister, as a partner at Slater and Gordon, advised on the incorporation of the AWU Workplace Reform Association, did she take to ensure that using the name of the union would not breach section 8 of the Associations Incorporation Act regarding the misleading use of names for associations?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:29): My role as a lawyer was to provide legal advice acting on my client’s instructions. If the Registrar of Incorporated Associations forms a view that such an association being incorporated was in breach of the relevant legislation then that would be a matter for them. I remind the Deputy Leader that my role was to provide legal advice. The entity that determined to incorporate this association is the Western Australian registrar of incorporated associations. If she is contending that the registrar of incorporated associations did not act in accordance with their legislation then that is a matter she should take up with them.

Rail Infrastructure

Mr CRAIG THOMSON (Dobell) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. For more than a decade, the Central Coast has been promised high-speed rail to link us with Sydney and Newcastle. Current travel times between Sydney and Newcastle were recently acknowledged by Infrastructure NSW as being slower than the prewar Newcastle flyer steam train. When will the Central Coast see a true high-speed rail service to take the pressure off the many thousands of commuters who have to spend long hours away from their families each day?

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:30): I thank the member for Dobell for his question and, indeed, for a policy question from that side of the House. Perhaps it will be the only one that comes from alternate numbers today. He has a concern. He points towards the growing population in his electorate and on the Central Coast. I know that the member for Robertson shares his concern about commuting times, particularly for rail. Those slow commuting times put pressure on the F3. That people spend hour after hour on that freeway, that they spend more time on that freeway than they do at home with their kids, is a real concern for family life in his electorate.

It is expected that by 2036 the population of the Central Coast will increase by 30 per cent. That is one of the reasons we have undertaken, as part of a commitment we made during the last election campaign, a
high-level study into high-speed rail for the east coast. Part of what the first stage of that study showed was that it was not just about the long-distance trips between Sydney and Melbourne and Sydney and Brisbane, which are of course some of the busiest air routes in the world; it was also about the commuter traffic, particularly between the Central Coast, Newcastle and also Canberra and the difference it could make in taking pressure off the growth particularly in the outer suburbs of Sydney by making it possible to get from the member’s electorate of Dobell to the city in around 40 minutes. Many people in Sydney would take longer than that. Indeed, sometimes it takes longer than 40 minutes to get from Marrickville into the CBD. So that would make it extremely competitive.

We are having a study to produce the facts—the proper costings, the proper rail corridors, the proper time lines and the proper patronage figures—so that we can then have a debate from early next year about whether the community is prepared to pay the cost of this. We know there is a high cost to high-speed rail, but we also have to consider it in the context of the regional development opportunities that would exist and also in the context of the costs that would not exist for rail and road on a regular basis. This is a study that will be handed down early next year. I thank the member for Dobell for his ongoing interest in this issue.

We know that in Europe and Asia high-speed rail is a growing part of the transport solution. Of course, they have much denser populations than Australia does across the vast expanse of this continent, so the challenge here is much greater. (Time expired)

Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (14:34): My question is to the Attorney-General. Will the Attorney-General update the House on the establishment of the royal commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse?

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management) (14:34): I thank the member for Shortland for her question. I know that she and the member for Newcastle, the member for Charlton and the member for Hunter, along with people on all sides of this House, have particularly welcomed the royal commission. Those in the Hunter region have responded for a long period of time to the awful reports of child sexual abuse that are alleged to have occurred in their community.

I think in this House everyone is very clear that child sexual abuse by anyone at any time is a wretched crime. We know that it destroys young lives and we know that those young people are then haunted forever when they become adults. It is because of this that there has been an overwhelming response to the Prime Minister’s announcement that a royal commission will be conducted. That response has enthusiastically come from all corners of the country. I want to acknowledge here as well the opposition and those on the cross bench, who have also enthusiastically and constructively engaged with this debate.

Getting the ground work right is essential for us to be able to ensure that the royal commission can work effectively and can investigate responses to instances and allegations of child sexual abuse in institutions across the country. I want to report to the House that, as well as a number of meetings the government have been
conducting with stakeholders, we have received more than 270 emails and 33 submissions—these are detailed comments that have been provided—as well as over 1,000 hits to the website. We are making sure that we constructively and carefully look at all of these responses to ensure that the community can have its say in the formation of the commission.

The submissions that have been received so far highlight a couple of important things: the importance of designing the hearing process appropriately so that victims feel supported through the process of preparing and giving evidence; and the need to appoint multiple commissioners with broad expertise. Legal expertise and child protection expertise are those that were most commonly mentioned in the submissions. Also the view of many who have put in comments to the government is that the commission should take whatever time is needed to get it right but also include timely reporting, with suggestions of every one or two years, with the recognition that the commission will need sufficient time to investigate thoroughly.

Importantly, though, these 300-odd emails and submissions from stakeholders have sent a very strong message—that the commission needs to focus on systemic issues of child sexual abuse to make sure that recommendations can be implemented in a timely manner. It is very clear that the community wants the commission and all governments across Australia to do everything we can to make sure that what has happened in the past is never allowed to happen again. Therefore this will be a priority for our government and an important issue for society as a whole to confront to ensure that we do all we can to stop this type of pain occurring again in the future. (Time expired)

Prime Minister

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:37): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's statement today that she knew absolutely nothing about the workings of the AWU Workplace Reform Association or any bank accounts associated with it. I also refer to her statement to Slater & Gordon in 1995 that her thinking behind the decision to register an incorporated association was to avoid disputes about who owned the funds in the bank account and so that the association was the holder of the account. What steps did she take to ensure the association was authorised by the Australian Workers Union to open such a bank account bearing its name? (Time expired)

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:38): To the Deputy Leader of the Opposition: once again I dealt with a comparable question in the press conference today. But let me be very clear with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition because I think she is confusing a few things here. I acted as a solicitor providing legal advice on the instructions of clients. In terms of compliance with the rules of an industrial organisation, whether it be the AWU or any other industrial organisation, obviously that is a question for the members and office-holders of that association. So if she is concerned about the upholding of AWU rules then that is a matter that she needs to pursue with the AWU, although I do note she would be seeking to pursue with them a matter almost two decades old.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:39): I rise on a supplementary question. Given that the Prime Minister was a solicitor for the AWU at the relevant time, does she expect the parliament to believe that she was unaware
that, to use the words of Ian Cambridge, then head of the AWU, these arrangements to establish bank accounts were required by various resolutions of national executives under the AWU rules?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:39): Once again the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is confusing roles and responsibilities in relation to this matter. I have never been a member of the AWU. I have never sat on its national executive. I have never participated in the making of a resolution at the national executive as a member of the national executive. These are all matters for the union and the union's governance and conduct. What I did as a solicitor was provide advice on the incorporation of an association. It was the Registrar of Incorporated Associations that then registered it, and of course it was then a matter for the office-bearers and members of the association about how it conducted itself subsequently.

In an analogy that I think the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would understand, it is possible to be a lawyer advising on the incorporation of a company; it is then a question for the relevant company authorities as to whether the company is incorporated, and no person of reason would say that the lawyer who provided advice on the incorporation is therefore somehow responsible for the dealings of the company once it is incorporated. No-one would put that about a company. The situation here is directly analogous to that. I provided legal advice, as I have publicly verified for a long time now, including as recently as in a press conference today.

Murray-Darling Basin

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (14:41): My question is to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. Will the minister advise the House on the government's plan to restore the Murray-Darling Basin to health? What are the next steps before the parliament on this plan?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (14:41): I thank the member for Kingston for the question. She has been a passionate advocate for restoring the Murray-Darling Basin to health. Australia now has a Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The plan is legally binding and the establishment of the plan follows a long line of processes which have occurred over the years while government has changed back and forth.

The process that we are in at the moment goes all the way back to 1991, when there was an outbreak of blue-green algae. At that point, instead of the Murray-Darling simply being a negotiation between the states, the river itself negotiated back and it negotiated hard, sending a message loud and clear that if we did not manage the rivers properly none of us would be able to use the water. The Keating government followed up in 1994 with a COAG agreement that set the framework which water reform follows today. Under the Howard government we had the National Water Initiative in 2004 and, in 2007, the establishment of the Water Act, overseen by the then Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, the member for Wentworth.

When the Rudd government came in we then had under Minister Wong the establishment of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and large amounts of water starting to be accumulated and reserved for the purposes of environmental water, to restore the system to health. We now under the Gillard government have a situation where Australia has as force of law a binding Murray-Darling Basin Plan. In arriving at
this plan, the parliament has been well served by the work of the Windsor committee, which has brought different members of the parliament together and asked for methods by which this reform could be achieved in a way that is sensitive to communities. Wherever we could reach the environmental objectives that the reform demanded in ways that were sensitive to communities—through minimising buyback, through maximising environmental works and measures and infrastructure investment—we have done so.

But make no mistake: while we have compromised on the way of getting there, there has been no compromise on the ambition of the reform itself. This reform does restore the Murray-Darling Basin to health. This reform does mean that we will not see again the drying up of the system at the South Australian end the way we have in the past, that we will not see the drying up of Hatter Lakes or the Narran Lakes, and that we will not see those sorts of blue-green algae outbreaks on the 1,000-kilometre scale which characterised the early 1990s.

I want to refer to the fact that from five o'clock today the Murray-Darling Basin Plan will have been tabled in this parliament and will be available for disallowance. I understand there has been a statement from the Greens saying that they intend to move disallowance. I just want to make clear to the parliament that if we can only resolve to continue to fight and not reach a solution we are no better than the generations that have failed before us. (Time expired)

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

The **SPEAKER** (14:44): I inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon the Speaker of the legislative assembly of the Kingdom of Tonga, Lord Fakafanua. On behalf of the House, I extend to him a very warm welcome.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Prime Minister**

Ms **JULIE BISHOP** (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:44): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to her statement today that she provided legal advice for the incorporation of the AWU Workplace Reform Association, and I refer to section 5 of the Associations Incorporation Act, which requires an association to have more than five members before it can be incorporated. Apart from Bruce Wilson and Ralph Blewitt, who were the other members of this association?

Ms **GILLARD** (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:45): I think the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has now diverted off from any matters involving me and she is involved in a furious dispute with whoever was the registrar of incorporated associations in WA at the time.

**Opposition members:** You set it up!

Ms **GILLARD:** They are chanting, 'You set it up!'—and that is the point that you do not understand. Let me explain it to you, because here we are once again with smear. I remind the House—and I will take this opportunity, given we have taken an interjection about something that is factually wrong and is 100 per cent smear—of what we have had in this parliament. We have had the Deputy Leader of the Opposition ask questions before. On 1 November she claimed I set up a fund in 1992. That claim is false. I provided advice on the incorporation of an association under Western Australian law. On the same day, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said I was involved and advising Ralph Blewitt in a defamation action in 1993. That claim is false. It is directly contradicted by the published
defamation file, which shows that other lawyers at Slater & Gordon had responsibility for this matter. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has also described me in this parliament as the lawyer advising on the conveyance of a Fitzroy property. That statement is false. It is contradicted by the published file, a statement by the then partner in charge and a statement made by the firm itself. So, when we were last dealing with this matter in question time, in the space of two days the Deputy Leader of the Opposition misled the parliament three times. So, to those on the opposition front bench who are starting to interject, I would say: do not follow your leader and your deputy leader into this sleaze and smear and the making of false claims in this parliament.

Three times the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has misled this parliament. That is a matter she ought to apologise to this parliament for and to the Australian people for.

**Opposition members:** Answer the question!

**The SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister will return to the question before the chair.

**Ms GILLARD:** On the deputy leader's question, I would remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the entity that incorporates associations is the registrar under applicable law. It is the registrar that makes the decision as to whether or not—

*Ms Julie Bishop interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has asked her question.

**Ms GILLARD:** the requirements of the legislation have been complied with. No amount of shouting changes that simple fact. It is exactly the same as if one were incorporating a company and it is the relevant company authorities that work out if the Companies Act has been complied with. So, if she has formed the view that this association ought not to have been incorporated, she needs to take that up with the registrar in Western Australia.

**Trade**

**Mr PERRETT** (Moreton) (14:48): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Competitiveness. Will the minister advise the House of recent developments in trade policy? How do they build on the government's plan to support a modern and competitive economy?

**Dr EMERSON** (Rankin—Minister for Trade and Competitiveness and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Asian Century Policy) (14:48): I thank the member for Moreton for his trade policy question. Indeed, it is the 24th question from the government side of this chamber on trade policy. The contrast is that I have, in the 788 days since walking into this chamber as trade minister, received not five, not four, not three, not two, not one question—

**Mr Frydenberg:** Give us a song! Give us dance!

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Kooyong might be getting a song and dance soon if he is not careful!

**Dr EMERSON:** from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and shadow trade minister but none. In fact, the last time I received a policy question from the opposition was 1,022 days ago. In that amount of time, Captain Cook left England, he went to Tahiti, he sailed past New Zealand, he discovered Botany Bay, he documented Botany Bay, he explored Botany Bay, he left, he went to Indonesia, he got some repairs and he headed home to England—1,022 days!

**The SPEAKER:** The minister will come to the question.

**Dr EMERSON:** The fact is: in the last week, we have finalised the Malaysia-
Australia Free Trade Agreement, which will provide 99 per cent duty-free access for Australian exporters into Malaysia. That will go through the parliament tomorrow or the next day. Last week, the Prime Minister and I were in Phnom Penh, where the Prime Minister participated in the launch of a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement covering 30 per cent of the global economy. The Prime Minister and I participated in a meeting of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement parties. That was chaired by President Obama. Both of these are pathways to a free trade area for Asia and the Pacific. While we were in Phnom Penh, we promoted Australia's plan for the future—Australia in the Asian century, offering fantastic career opportunities for young Australians. That is our plan for Australia. Here is the contrast: we have got a government with plans and policies; we have got an opposition with fear and smear—two years of fear and now we are on to smear. The reason for that is that the Leader of the Opposition is a policy weakling. So much is he a policy weakling that there is Essential research out today that shows—

_Mr Dutton_: How is this relevant?

_The SPEAKER_: The minister will return to the question.

_Dr Emerson_: There is Essential research out today that shows that the carbon price is much more popular than the Leader of the Opposition. So miserably has he failed in his fear campaign that they are on to smear. This parliament is going to witness a triumph of plans over fear, of policy over smear—and you will get what is coming to you from this smear campaign that you have engaged in. _Time expired_

_Prime Minister_

_Ms Julie Bishop_ (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:51): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's answer to my last question. Didn't the Western Australian Commissioner for Corporate Affairs in fact raise concerns about this proposed association prior to its incorporation? Will the Prime Minister confirm that, as a partner of Slater & Gordon, she wrote to the commissioner in 1992 vouching that the association complied with the legal requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act, even though she knew it did not?

_The SPEAKER_: I think the last part of the question may have been out of order.

_Ms Gillard_ (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:52): For those who are normal, are engaged in worrying about jobs, health and education and have not followed the minutiae of this matter, let me just explain for their edification. The claim that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has now made is a claim that appeared in the _Age_. I think the name of the journalist who made that claim is Mark Baker. The correspondence he refers to has never been produced, so the claim has been made but no correspondence has ever been produced.

What I can say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is what I have said in answer to her earlier questions. I provided legal advice about the incorporation of the association. Then, of course, the association is only incorporated if the relevant authority, the registrar, is satisfied that the normal legislative needs and details have been satisfied. Clearly, the registrar must have been so satisfied, or they would not have incorporated the association. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has formed the view—

_Mr Pyne_: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. The Prime Minister has said that no letter has been produced, but she was asked
whether she confirmed if it was true or not, and she must know that from her own knowledge.

**The SPEAKER:** The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Prime Minister has the call.

**Ms GILLARD:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I was just indicating that it is clear what my role was. I provided legal advice. It is also clear what the registrar's role was. It is the registrar that makes the judgement about whether or not the relevant legislation has been complied with. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has formed the view that this association ought not to have been incorporated, then that is a matter she should take up with the registrar in Western Australia—although, given that we are talking about the best part of 20 years ago, I think it is highly unlikely that we are talking about the same individual. But that is a matter for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to pursue in Western Australia with the registrar.

**Carbon Pricing**

**Mr CHEESEMAN** (Corangamite) (14:54): My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency and Minister for Industry and Innovation. The carbon price has now been in operation for nearly 150 days. Would the minister update the House on its impact on the Australian economy? How does this compare with previous predictions?

**Mr COMBET** (Charlton—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (14:55): Thank you to the member for Corangamite for his question. Australia's economy, with the introduction of the carbon price—after 150 days of its operation—is still growing. We still have low unemployment. We still have strong business investment. We have low inflation, and we have much lower interest rates than when the coalition was in government. Those are the facts, and they do not accord that well with the fear campaign that the Leader of the Opposition conducted month after month after month in a cowardly performance to try and terrify people into supporting the coalition.

The point that my colleague the Minister for Trade made earlier—about having an opposition leader, after all that fear and all that mendacity, less popular than the carbon price, which was supposed to destroy towns and regions—was quite telling. Remember his claim that it would destroy hundreds of thousands of jobs? In fact, the figures show—

**Mr Turnbull:** Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. The minister knows that to accuse the Leader of the Opposition of mendacity is to accuse him of lying, and he should withdraw it.

**Honourable members interjecting**

**The SPEAKER:** I am on my feet. The standing orders and *House of Representatives Practice* are very clear. Whether we like it or not, it is the word 'lie' that the parliament has objected to, not the variations on it. I understand the point that the member for Wentworth is making, but, if you go to *House of Representatives Practice*, it is the word 'lie' that cannot be stated. The minister has the call.

**Mr COMBET:** Thank you, Speaker. I would like to thank the member for Wentworth, because it was a point well made. Let us just look at some facts. The prediction by the Leader of the Opposition was that hundreds of thousands of jobs would be lost. That is what he said. The figures are showing 25,000 extra jobs added to our economy since the carbon price came into operation. In fact, when you look at the
way that the economy is changing and businesses are adjusting to it, we are improving energy efficiency. We are reducing emissions intensity in our economy. We are reducing greenhouse gases. The carbon price revenue is being used to support businesses to reduce their emissions.

One of the projects in this respect is carried out by Thiess Australia, a company that has been referred to by some of those opposite from time to time. Its Tamworth based abattoir is developing a biogas project which has been made viable by the carbon price operation, which will cut its energy costs by $327,000 a year. Also, last week Siemens, a large international company, announced it would work with a contracting firm to manufacture up to 20 wind towers in Whyalla for the Snowtown II wind farm project. That is the Whyalla that the Leader of the Opposition said would be wiped off the map.

As this year draws to a close, the carbon price is unquestionably having a positive effect on the economy in reducing its emissions intensity, and every mendacious claim that the Leader of the Opposition made is being shown up. Is it any wonder that his net approval is so low?

**Prime Minister**

**Ms JULIE BISHOP** (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:59): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to her statement today that she provided legal advice to set up the AWU Workplace Reform Association and to her 1995 statement to Slater & Gordon that it was a slush fund to finance election campaigns. I also refer the Prime Minister to the incorporation documents that make no mention of financing elections. Does the Prime Minister admit that, when she inserted the name 'Australian Workers Union' in the documents with the stated purpose of promoting workplace safety, it could have misled people that it was an authorised union entity for the purpose of workplace safety when neither— *(Time expired)*

**Ms GILLARD** (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:00): Whilst I am not entirely sure of the point of the deputy leader's question—she did not appear to get to it—on my role in relation to providing legal advice for the AWU reform association, the nature of my role is dealt with in the Slater & Gordon internal review document from 1995, which has now been in the public domain for quite a long period of time.

**Mr Andrews**: Another nonanswer.

**Ms GILLARD**: I dealt with this very clearly in a very long press conference that I gave on 23 August, and I refer her to all of the things that I described there. I refer her to the fact that I have dealt with this matter again today. That is the sum total of it. It is dealt with in some detail. So, whilst the Opposition will keep twisting and turning and bringing in more irrelevancies— *(Time expired)*

**Mr Andrews**: You're the one twisting and turning!

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

**Ms GILLARD**: because, of course, the opposition do not have any positive plans for the nation's future, so they have to fill the air
with sleaze and smear. No amount of asking questions on this matter is going to take the matter further about my role than what I have already very clearly dealt with on the public record.

Ms Julie Bishop: I seek leave to table a 1997 letter from the WA state crime squad to the Industrial Relations Court of Australia confirming that Thiess Contractors paid money into this slush fund believing it was authorised by the union and would not have done so if it had known it was unauthorised.

Mr Albanese: No, I table from the Australian 'Bishop's asbestos case role' from 3 December 2007.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will resume his seat.

Northern Australia

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (15:02): My question is to the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts. Will the minister inform the House of the outcomes of the recent Northern Australian Ministerial Forum? How are these outcomes delivering on the government's plans for the sustainable development of Northern Australia?

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts) (15:02): I thank the member for Capricornia for her question. She has been a strong advocate for the significance of the Northern Australian Ministerial Forum, which essentially deals with a coordinated strategy across the whole of the Top End of Australia north of the Tropic of Capricorn.

I want to pay tribute to the member for Brand because, in a previous role in this chamber, he was responsible for advocating, through the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce, the establishment of this forum. We held in Kununurra last week the fifth meeting in less than two years of this forum. It had two important things coming from it, apart from the material that it received in relation to beef, where obviously, with the closure of the beef market into Indonesia, there is a realisation that reliance on one market and one country is not the way for the beef industry to go. The diversification that has happened there in terms of logistics, in terms of markets and in terms of abattoir facilities was all reported on and significant progress was made.

Carbon farming was also discussed with regard to opportunities for Indigenous Australians with savanna burning, in terms of not only trading the credits but improving the management of the soils, along with water and land tenure—these were all discussed. What was also significant was the location, Kununurra, which has seen the coming together of a partnership between the federal and state governments, something that was started under the previous Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and Colin Barnett 3½ years ago. This has now come to almost complete fruition, with the expansion of the second stage of the Ord River development, and the opening whilst I was there of new TAFE facilities in both Kununurra and Wyndham, new school facilities, a medical centre, a wharf and jetty at Wyndham and the Mirrawong-Gadgerong—the Indigenous holders of the land—new building. That new building is significant because they have played a really constructive role in dealing with the land management issues and the discussions around native title. Also present at this meeting was the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. He has understood the importance of the next stage of the Ord development involving water going into the Northern Territory. So not only do we have a
partnership between governments; we have cross-border issues being dealt with.

This is an example of a location based approach to regional development—something that we in the Labor Party fundamentally agree with in developing partnerships and working to achieve an outcome for the regions that builds on their fundamental strengths. This is something that we have implemented that those on the other side never had the wit to, and we want the opportunity to keep going with it. (Time expired)

Prime Minister

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to her August statement as to why she did not open a file for the advice she gave for the incorporation of the association and to her 1995 statement that she sought no advice from anyone else at Slater & Gordon. Given that only the Prime Minister, Wilson and Blewitt were involved in setting up the AWU Workplace Reform Association, is the reason she did not open a file that it would have alerted her partners and the AWU to the existence of an unauthorised slush fund that received money for the benefit of Wilson and Blewitt?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:06): To the deputy leader's question, no, that is not the reason. I put the reason on the public record in the press conference that I did in August about how this was a matter that I was not intending to charge on, how it was routine to do small matters for unions without fees and I consequently did not open a file.

To the Deputy Leader of the Opposition I say that this is bordering on the embarrassing now to savour the questions. Let me assure her that I did not fake the moon landing, I was not responsible for the assassination of JFK, I did not shove Harold Holt on a Chinese submarine—just before she gets to those questions. Because where these conspiracy theories are getting us is truly absurd and generally embarrassing, and all of it of course is a cover-up for the fact that this man has got not one idea for the nation's future.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:07): Madam Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. I refer to the Prime Minister's August statement that after she helped set up the association she had no knowledge of its workings until allegations were raised in 1995. Who first raised those allegations with the Prime Minister—and when—in 1995? And what were those allegations about the workings of the association?

Mr Albanese: On a point of order: I think as Leader of the House I have been pretty tolerant of questions that go to the Prime Minister's responsibility. We now specifically have questions which use the date 1995—what did the Prime Minister know then, who told her that then?—when quite clearly, they cannot possibly be within the purview of the Prime Minister's responsibility. Indeed, it was well prior to her election to parliament.

The SPEAKER: I think the Leader of the House makes a fair point about the authority of the Prime Minister, but as the Prime Minister has addressed these issues in public, the House of Representatives Practice would state that the question is in order and I will give the call to the Prime Minister.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:08): Thank you very much, Speaker. I dealt very extensively, at the press conference I held just before question time, with my state of knowledge in 1995 on these matters coming to the attention of the Slater
& Gordon partnership. I refer the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to that transcript, held at a press conference—one of those incredibly secret things!

**National Disability Insurance Scheme**

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (15:09): My question is to the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Minister for Disability Reform. Will the minister update the House on the government's progress in building a National Disability Insurance Scheme?

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (15:09): I thank the member for Hunter for his question—a positive question from the government side of the parliament, not one positive question in the whole of question time from those opposite. They say they do not want to throw any mud, but all they can do day after day is throw mud—not one question from the Leader of the Opposition, not one question on the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Leave it to the government to make sure that people with disability no longer have to wait at the end of a phone for a respite place. No wonder they are ashamed and never ask a question about disability, because they are the people who never, ever come here and raise the issues that confront people with disability and their carers every single day.

This government is proud of what we have done for people with disability. Of course, it is this government that made sure that we increased the Disability Support Pension, increased the carer payment, made sure that services are available for children with autism and made sure that people who are desperately looking for a supported accommodation place can actually get a better chance of looking for one. It has been up to this government to deliver all of these changes for disability—never done by any of those opposite.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

Ms MACKLIN: In fact, when you had the chance in government to do something for people with disability, you slashed the funding for disability. So it has been up to this government to do the work for people with disability. It is this government that will introduce the legislation for a National Disability Insurance Scheme, and we will get on with that job.

Ms Gillard: It being the usual time, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper. For the benefit of those following proceedings by radio, I confirm that the Leader of the Opposition was present at question time today.

**PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION**

**Oath or Affirmation of Allegiance**

The SPEAKER (15:11): Order! I present an authority I have received from Her Excellency the Governor-General authorising me to administer to members the oath or affirmation of allegiance.

**AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS**

Audit Report No. 10 of 2012-13


Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:12): I move:

That the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Question agreed to.
DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:12): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. I move:

That the House take note of the following documents:

- Australian Human Rights Commission—Reports—
  No. 56—Sri Lankan refugees v Commonwealth of Australia.
  No. 57—ST v Endeavour Energy.
- Australian Prudential Regulation Authority—Report for 2011-12.
- Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation—
  High Court of Australia—Report for 2011-12.
- Sydney Airport Demand Management Act—Quarterly report on movement cap for Sydney airport for the period 1 July to 30 September 2012.
- Torres Strait Regional Authority—Report for 2011-12.

Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings and Hansard.

Question agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Constitutional Recognition of Local Government Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER (15:13): I have received advice from the Chief Government Whip, the Chief Opposition Whip and Mr Windsor nominating members to be members of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:13): by leave—I move:

That Ms Rowland, Mr Zappia, Ms Livermore, Mr Coulton, Mrs Prentice, Mr Irons and Mr Windsor be appointed members of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government.

Question agreed to.

Regional Australia Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER (15:14): I have received advice from the Chief Opposition Whip nominating a member to be a supplementary member of the Standing Committee on Regional Australia for the purpose of the committee's inquiry into the Water Amendment (Water for the Environment Special Account) Bill 2012.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:14): by leave—I move:

That Dr Stone be appointed a supplementary member of the Standing Committee on Regional Australia for the purpose of the committee's inquiry into Water Amendment (Water for the Environment Special Account) Bill 2012.

Question agreed to.
BILLS

Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (15:14): by leave—I move:

That the bill be referred to the Federation Chamber for further consideration.

Question agreed to.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Questions Without Notice

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth) (15:15): Madam Speaker, I seek clarification from you, but I will just put a little bit of context—

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, on a point of order on process: it has been determined in recent times that, where the Speaker has made rulings, the Speaker will not entertain questions on the detail of the rulings after question time and instead will do it in private or on some other occasion. The ruling was made by Speaker Jenkins and then confirmed by Speaker Slipper. I do not object to my friend the member for Wentworth raising his question, but I do think that such questions have been raised at too-regular intervals and that Speaker Jenkins was very wise to suggest that it is not appropriate to do so at this time.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of the House. I will allow the member for Wentworth to pose this question. I think it is very valid, though I perhaps will not give him an answer on the spot.

Mr TURNBULL: I raised a point of order on the minister for climate change describing the opposition leader as having acted 'mendaciously'. My point was that 'mendaciously' means 'lyingly' and that the use of 'mendaciously' should therefore be objectionable. Your ruling was that it was only disorderly to use the word 'lie'. I respectfully draw to your attention that the House of Representatives Practice says:

... examples of expressions which are unparliamentary—

Citing May, which is the UK equivalent of the Practice, include—

the imputation of false or unavowed motives;

... ... ...

charges of uttering a deliberate falsehood ...

So, if I say that someone is mendacious, I am charging that they have uttered a deliberate falsehood. That is what mendacious means. The Practice goes on to say:

An accusation that a Member has lied or deliberately misled is clearly an imputation of an improper motive. Such words are ruled out of order and Members making them ordered to withdraw their remarks.

That is at page 516 of the Practice.

I do not think that this place will be held in high regard if it is objectionable to say, 'The honourable member has lied,' but not objectionable to say, 'The honourable member has acted mendaciously.' These two sentences are completely synonymous, and—with great respect to you, Madam Speaker—the remarks of the minister were equally objectionable whether he used the word 'lie' or the word 'mendacious', and they should have been withdrawn. I ask you to rule on this—at your leisure, of course.

The SPEAKER: I think we need to draw a distinction between a ruling and advice given by the chair. That would be my only response to that for now. I thank the member for Wentworth and will report back to the House, as I think that otherwise we will go round and round in circles on this one.
MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

People-Trafficking

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management) (15:19): Today I am pleased to present to parliament the fourth annual report of the Anti-People Trafficking Interdepartmental Committee. The report provides comprehensive information about Australia's whole-of-government anti-people-trafficking strategy, covering the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012. As Attorney-General, I have oversight of the strategy in collaboration with my colleagues the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Minister for the Status of Women.

People trafficking destroys the lives of too many women and men around the world every year. Australia is not immune from this insidious form of modern-day slavery. It is wrong, it is a gross violation of human rights, and it is incumbent on us as a government, and the wider community, to do all we can to stamp people trafficking out.

In the last financial year, the government has continued to broaden the focus of its anti-people trafficking strategy to better reflect the scope of the problem. While the majority of victims identified in Australia continue to be women trafficked for exploitation in the commercial sex industry, authorities have increasingly identified both men and women exploited in a range of other industry sectors. Some identified victims were brought to Australia to work in restaurants, receiving little or no pay for very long hours and without rest periods or days off. Others were exploited as domestic workers in private residences, again working without adequate remuneration and with limited freedom of movement.

To ensure Australia's anti-people trafficking strategy remains responsive to emerging issues, its focus has continued to shift from combating sexual exploitation to addressing all forms of exploitation, regardless of industry.

To help combat trafficking in all forms and for all kinds of work, in 2011 the government awarded almost $500,000 to two non-government organisations, two union bodies and an industry association to undertake projects focused on labour exploitation. With support from the government, these organisations are currently working to raise awareness of labour exploitation through the development of training programs and materials, community and industry resources, and through outreach to vulnerable workers.

To further equip law enforcement agencies with the best possible tools to investigate and prosecute perpetrators, in May 2012 I introduced into parliament the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Slavery, Slavery-like Conditions and People Trafficking) Bill. The bill broadens the existing slavery and trafficking offences in the Commonwealth criminal code to ensure all forms of exploitative conduct are captured and criminalised. For example, the bill introduces a separate offence of forced labour and expands the offences of sexual servitude and deceptive recruiting for sexual services so they apply regardless of industry.

I am also particularly proud that the bill introduces new offences criminalising forced marriage. Forced marriage places young people at risk, and can have harmful consequences including loss of access to education, restriction of movement and autonomy, and emotional and physical abuse.

Marriage in Australia must be entered into freely by consenting adults. Coercion, threat or deception to bring about a marriage has no
place in a modern Australia and will not be tolerated.

These reforms send a clear message to those who believe they can commit such abhorrent crimes with impunity: slavery, slavery-like practices and people trafficking are unacceptable in Australia, and perpetrators will face serious penalties.

In introducing this legislation, the Gillard government is carrying on the great Labor tradition of standing up for the most vulnerable in society. We will give a voice to those who cannot always speak up for themselves.

Strong laws are important, but they need to be enforced. In the last financial year, the Australian Federal Police undertook 41 new investigations and assessments into trafficking-related offences, and the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions secured two convictions during the year. Importantly, one of these convictions represents Australia’s first successful prosecution for labour trafficking.

Australia also provides a comprehensive range of support services for suspected victims of people trafficking, including tailored case management support and assistance to access accommodation, income support, legal and migration advice, health services and counselling. In 2011-12, the government’s Support for Trafficked People Program, delivered by the Australian Red Cross, provided assistance to 77 clients, including nine new clients.

The case study of a woman I will call ‘Ms K’ is illustrative of a client’s experiences on the Support Program. Ms K was trafficked to Australia for the purpose of sexual exploitation in 2007. On her referral to the Support Program, Ms K was provided with secure accommodation, financial support, trauma counselling and medical treatment. As time went on, Ms K was assisted with accessing English language classes and legal and migration advice, including accessing assistance to apply for victims of crime compensation. With help from her Red Cross case worker and counsellor, Ms K has adjusted well to life in Australia and continues to build a secure and positive future. After assisting police, and due to the danger she faced in returning home because of that assistance, Ms K was granted a Witness Protection (Trafficking) (Permanent) visa.

This is just one example of the support that this Labor government has delivered to people who have faced some of the most terrible violations of their human rights.

In 2011-12, 26 of these visas were granted to victims, many of whom have experienced trauma similar to Ms K, and to their immediate family members. These visas allow trafficking victims to remain in Australia permanently if they have assisted with a trafficking investigation or prosecution and, as a result, would be in danger if they returned home.

Fortunately, due to our strong border controls and geographic isolation, opportunities to traffic people to Australia are limited. However, Australia is a destination country for victims of trafficking, in particular for people trafficked from South-East Asia.

While the number of victims in Australia remains low compared with other countries in our region, it is important to remember the devastating effects these exploitative crimes have on individual victims, like Ms K.

In the fight against these crimes there is always more work to be done. That’s why the government is committed to working domestically, regionally and internationally, in partnership with other governments and NGOs, to address the full cycle of trafficking, from recruitment to reintegration.
During 2011-12, Australia's collaborative approach to combating trafficking was recognised by the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. The Special Rapporteur visited Australia on a fact-finding mission in November 2011, and presented her final report to the UN Human Rights Council in May 2012. In her final report, the Special Rapporteur noted Australia's role as a regional leader in combating trafficking, and commended the robust working relationship between the Australian government and NGOs. The government looks forward to continuing our productive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur, and is already progressing work on several of the recommendations made in her final report.

As noted by the Special Rapporteur, Australia takes an active role in efforts to prevent people traffickers from operating in our region. In May 2012, Australia co-hosted with Indonesia a Technical Experts' Meeting on trafficking through the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. A range of experts from member countries participated in the meeting, including from law enforcement, immigration, legal policy and prosecution agencies. Experts from my department, the Attorney-General's Department, the Australian Federal Police, and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship gave presentations at the meeting, and participants shared lessons learned on measures to implement a coordinated approach to combating trafficking.

Australia continues to work with international partners, including ASEAN, to prevent trafficking in our region. Last week, the Prime Minister announced funding of $50 million dollars to support the continuation of the Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Project (ARTIP) for a further five years. ARTIP aims to strengthen the criminal justice response to trafficking and improve cross-border cooperation in South-East Asia. Since its inception in 2006, ARTIP has trained over 7,000 police officers, prosecutors and judges, providing increased regional capacity to combat trafficking and reducing the opportunities for people traffickers to operate in our region.

As part of the government's ongoing dialogue with NGOs on people trafficking, on 28 November I will convene the fifth annual National Roundtable on People Trafficking in conjunction with the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, and the Minister for the Status of Women. Each year, the national roundtable brings together anti-trafficking NGOs, service providers, support organisations and legal, industry and union bodies to implement a whole of community approach to combating trafficking in all its forms. In the fight against slavery, slavery-like conditions and people trafficking, government action is only part of the solution. Members of the national roundtable provide valuable advice to government on emerging issues, including, most recently, on the development of the new legislation.

In tabling the report today, I would like to thank the agencies that make up the interdepartmental committee. This report details the ongoing efforts of Australian government agencies and NGOs in their work to prevent these crimes, to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators, and crucially, to support and protect the victims.

Australia is often called the lucky country. And we may be lucky that Australia does not face the same degree of people trafficking as some of our near neighbours do. But, we cannot afford to rely on luck to stop this insidious trade.

That's why our government has dedicated both time and resources to combat people
trafficking in all its forms. It's why we have supported strong laws to deter people trafficking and funded support system to help people in need.

As a society, we have relegated the very worst of large-scale slavery to the history books. It is time to see people trafficking relegated to the history books too.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Anti-People Trafficking Interdepartmental Committee**

**Presentation**

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management) (15:29): I present a copy of the 4th report of the Anti-People Trafficking Interdepartmental Committee entitled *Trafficking in persons: The Australian government response—Report for the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012* and a copy of my ministerial statement.

I ask leave of the House to move a motion to enable the member for Stirling to speak for 10 minutes.

Leave granted.

Ms ROXON: I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the member for Stirling speaking for a period not exceeding 10 minutes.

Question agreed to.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (15:30): I am very pleased to respond on behalf of the coalition to the statement from the Attorney-General on the government's response to people trafficking. The coalition welcomes moves to strengthen the law in relation to the people-trafficking offences which were introduced in May. These moves build upon the strong work started under the previous Howard government and continued since the change of government in 2007. We must, however, be careful to ensure that the government gets the balance right and that the people-trafficking net does not unintentionally capture those who do the right thing.

As this is a government whose record on delivery is littered with failure, blunder and error, this must be one area where the government finally gets it right. We should be careful to ensure that those who operate lawfully and do the right thing are not penalised or discouraged from pursuing lawful options. That is why it is vitally important to get this area of law correct. Trafficking and exploitation are completely unacceptable in any circumstance and would never be condoned by any government or political party. But it is crucial for us to get these policy settings right and not to allow measures implemented to be viewed as a means to pursue other unrelated ends.

The opposition is well known for its strong stance on all matters relating to border protection. Equally, we have a longstanding interest and record in combating cross-border crime. We therefore welcome opportunities to support any measures to further this aim and to further the important fight against trafficking which has resulted from the roundtable process on people trafficking. The coalition believe that we must not only make laws which criminalise and punish this behaviour but that we must also ensure that we enforce those laws—and that our police, immigration and border protection agencies have the resources to enable them to do that job. We are particularly concerned about sustained and deep cuts to enforcement agencies, including the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, which has been savaged by this Labor government, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Australian Crime Commission—agencies which are integral to the fight against people trafficking and agencies which are going to
find it harder to do that job with less money and fewer personnel.

People trafficking is a complex crime and a major violation of human rights. It takes place for a variety of reasons, including sexual servitude, domestic labour, forced marriage and sweatshop labour. Women, men and children can be victims. While there is limited hard information on the number of people trafficked or on the target industries to which they are trafficked, evidence suggests that the trafficking of women into prostitution is the major, and certainly the most visible, form of trafficking taking place.

It is widely recognised that people trafficking has become a well-established and, sadly, enormously lucrative business throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Australia, unfortunately, is viewed as a destination country for persons trafficked out of South-East Asia. There are several reports of immigrants, particularly from India, the People's Republic of China and South Korea, who voluntarily migrate to work in Australia but who are later coerced into exploitative conditions.

I acknowledge the work of the former Howard government in this area. The former coalition government's response to people trafficking in the Asia-Pacific region included developing antitrafficking initiatives between governments and providing aid aimed at alleviating the economic and social conditions in the region which allow trafficking to flourish. In particular, the Howard government and Indonesia co-chaired two regional ministerial conferences on trafficking and smuggling in the years 2000 and 2003—now commonly referred to as the Bali Process. In October 2003, the then coalition government announced additional antitrafficking measures, including a $20 million package to target sex trafficking in particular. The package included a new Australian Federal Police unit, the Transnational Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Teams; new visa arrangements for victims of trafficking; victim support measures, including counselling and legal and medical support to be administered by the Office for Women; improvements to legislation to make people trafficking punishable by up to 20 years in jail; and a promise to ratify the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. Notably, Australia was already a signatory and the treaty was subsequently ratified in 2005. In 2004, the then coalition government produced, in support of the 2003 announcement, an action plan to eradicate trafficking in persons. In the last budget of the coalition government, a further $38.3 million over four years was allocated, including $26.3 million for new initiatives.

Since then, the coalition has continued to consider the issue a serious one and has supported a range of anti-people-trafficking measures, most of which have a sex-trafficking focus. The AFP's newly renamed Human Trafficking Team remains at the front line in tackling this problem. On behalf of the opposition, I pay tribute to the team—the men and women who work so hard, in very difficult circumstances, investigating trafficking cases and bringing them to court.

We must remember that, where you find this type of crime, you will find other types of crime. It is vitally important that the Australian Federal Police are properly resourced to do the job we ask of them. I am sure that all members in this place will acknowledge that it is completely unacceptable for even one person to fall victim to the heinous crime of people trafficking. The coalition broadly supports the Attorney-General's statement and
believes that Australia has a very important regional leadership role to play in this area. We will continue to support any moves this parliament adopts to combat what is a hideous crime.

COMMITTEES
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Joint Committee
Report
Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (15:36): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, I present the committee’s advisory report, incorporating a dissenting report, on the International Fund for Agricultural Development Amendment Bill 2012.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development is a Rome-based UN agency whose mission is to enable poor rural people to overcome poverty through providing access to financial services, markets, technology, land and other natural resources. After concerns were raised about IFAD in the early 2000s, Australia withdrew from the fund in 2004. This was because, at that time, it was considered that:

- IFAD was not delivering cost-effective and tangible returns;
- only a small percentage of IFAD programs were located within Australia’s priority countries of South-East Asia and the Pacific; and
- at that time IFAD did not have a clear mandate or role.

Following various crises during 2007-08—a global food crisis and a fuel crisis as well as the global financial crisis—the government started contemplating the reasons for withdrawal and how this stood in view of Australia's investments in global food security.

In April 2011, AusAID released a report reviewing Australia's engagement with IFAD. The report concluded that there was a strong business case for Australia to rejoin IFAD. The bill was subsequently introduced into the House and is intended to allow Australia to legally accede to the Agreement Establishing IFAD.

The Selection Committee referred the bill to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee and asked the committee to determine whether IFAD had fully addressed the concerns which prompted Australia to withdraw from the organisation and to consider the additional financial and human resources required by AusAID to support Australia's engagement with IFAD.

The committee considers that the various reforms introduced by IFAD since 2004, in part as a response to Australia's withdrawal, have addressed Australia's concerns. Specifically:

- IFAD's cost effectiveness has significantly increased;
- its programs have become more aligned with Australia's aid program; and
- IFAD now has a clear mandate and role.

Further, by becoming a significant contributor to IFAD, Australia places itself in a prime position to influence the direction of the organisation and maintain its program of reform.

The report also identifies other benefits arising from Australia rejoining IFAD and these should not be ignored. These include:

- providing another way to implement Australia's commitment to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification;
- providing an opportunity to advocate Australia's position on food security, agricultural trade and development; and
potentially facilitating the ability of South Pacific countries to access funds from the IFAD-administered Global Environment Facility.

The committee has also concluded that the burden on Australia's projected aid budget imposed by rejoining IFAD is small, and the additional staff employed, in particular Australia's Rome-based counsellor, will be able to promote Australia's interests with the other Rome-based UN agencies.

The committee concludes that there is significant benefit in Australia rejoining IFAD and has recommended that the bill be passed by the House.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those who provided submissions to the review, and to AusAID, who provided evidence at the public hearing. I would in particular like to commend Hansard, which provided the proof transcript within hours of the conclusion of the public hearing. This enabled the committee to meet a very tight deadline for considering the bill. Finally, I thank my colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee—particularly the member for Berowra, who I know has a keen interest in these things—and the secretariat. I commend the report to the House.

In accordance with standing order 39(f) the report was made a parliamentary paper.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (15:41): I was not aware that the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade was being tabled precisely at this time, but let me say that the report on the International Fund for Agricultural Development Amendment Bill, which was considered by the relevant subcommittee, was not a unanimous report.

In fact, there is some substantial dissent in which I and a number of my colleagues have joined, and that dissent really goes to the nub of this legislation that the House will be asked to consider: has the way in which this organisation has been conducted been effectively reformed in such a way as to justify this new decision by the government to rejoin the body and to make substantial financial contributions to it?

It became clear that some issues had at least been raised, but it seems quite clear to me on the evidence that came before the committee that those issues have not been fully and adequately addressed. For that reason the dissent makes it clear that members of the opposition are not prepared to support legislation that will enable Australia to rejoin IFAD at this time and to commence making significant financial contributions to it. Our view might have been different if the reform process had been completed adequately, but when you find that the international diplomats that are party to a body of this type are ensuring that they and their circumstances are well looked after and that they are able to live in substantial premises in Europe on a very significantly subsidised basis, you do ask where our moneys might be going, particularly when they are our aid moneys that we see as being so very important.

There has been some attempt, but I think it has been marginal at best, to also commit some of the IFAD budget to programs within South-East Asia and the Pacific region, which we regard as being important. There have been some attempts to look at where they might be able to work in the Pacific but I do not think they are what I would regard as substantial commitments at this time and certainly they are not sufficiently substantial to warrant the size of the contribution that we are being asked to make. Those who are interested in the matter might find my remarks more fully spelt out in my more considered comments in the dissenting report, but I thought it was important to indicate that while this report has been...
proffered, having been sought by the House, and the recommendation is that we should approve the bill, that was certainly not unanimously supported and there was substantial dissent by members of the opposition.

Procedure Committee

Report

Mr LYONS (Bass) (15:45): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Procedure, I present the committee's report entitled Monitoring and review of procedural changes implemented in the 43rd Parliament: 4th report, together with the minutes of proceedings.

This is the fourth in a series of reports the Procedure Committee has tabled for its ongoing review into the procedural changes implemented in the 43rd Parliament. The previous reports have documented the reforms and their initial implementation and considered several aspects of the reforms in detail.

This report considers whether or not the original intention of the reforms to develop a more active and participatory House for all members has been realised. It looks in detail at the implementation process and the various adaptations that have been made and revisits some of the issues previously identified by the committee.

The Agreement for a Better Parliament: Parliamentary Reform was the catalyst for these procedural changes. The aim of the agreement was to increase the opportunities for participation by all members of parliament and we feel this has occurred. There has been a substantial increase in both private members' bills and motions introduced into the House. We are particularly pleased to see the number of private members' bills being presented and debated. This has allowed backbenchers, regardless of their political affiliation, to demonstrate their effectiveness as representatives of the people.

Among other things, the agreement put forward proposals to address the ongoing discontent with the conduct of question time. However, despite efforts by successive Speakers, we do not feel that the reforms have significantly improved question time. It is still competitive and argumentative. It does not provide a very good reflection of the parliament to the Australian public. Questions are negative and repetitive to the point of being boring, and answers are not necessarily directly relevant.

Over two years after the implementation of the procedural reforms, one of our major concerns remains the detrimental effect of the extended sitting hours on the health and wellbeing of members, their staff and the parliamentary staff. Although it may be politically unpopular to raise this issue, we cannot afford to ignore it and its consequences. Accordingly, we have reiterated our previous recommendation that changes be made in this area.

Ultimately, the committee would like to see the procedural changes that were initiated in the 43rd Parliament lead to meaningful and sustainable change to the way parliament works. In this regard, we acknowledge that the government has noted the recommendations in our previous reports and supports two of them. However, for effective long-term parliamentary reform, further action will be required to embed these changes. More importantly, each of us as members of parliament will need to commit to ongoing cultural change.

In gathering evidence for this inquiry we have held discussions with a range of colleagues including the current Speaker, her two predecessors, party whips, members and the Clerk. I thank all of them for their time and the contribution they have made to our
deliberations. I also thank my colleagues on the Procedure Committee for their work on this inquiry and I particularly thank the secretariat for their support with this report. I commend the report to the House.

In accordance with standing order 39(f) the report was made a parliamentary paper.

Law Enforcement Committee

Report

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (15:49): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement, I present the committee's advisory report on the Regulatory Powers (Standard Provisions) Bill 2012, together with the evidence received by the committee.

The Regulatory Powers Bill 2012 is drafted as a bill of general application. It is intended to create a standard suite of monitoring and investigative powers and enforcement provisions which may be brought into effect by 'trigger mechanisms' contained in new or amended legislation.

In the course of its inquiry into the bill the committee received 10 submissions. It conducted a hearing at which the Attorney-General's Department gave evidence.

In examining those submissions, and considering that evidence, the Law Enforcement committee formed the view that there were complex issues arising from the bill that required further examination. The committee agreed that the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, to which the bill had also been initially referred, was the best placed to inquire into those issues.

On that basis, the report I table today recommends the Regulatory Powers (Standard Provisions) Bill 2012 be referred to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry.

The Law Enforcement committee appreciates the efforts of submitters and witnesses to its inquiry, and acknowledges their contribution. It further recommends that the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee have the power to consider and use the evidence submitted to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement in relation to its inquiry on that bill.

In accordance with standing order 39(f) the report was made a parliamentary paper.

BILLS

Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield) (15:52): I am very pleased to rise to speak on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012, a bill which forms part of the third tranche of legislation which purports to implement the recommendations of the Cooper review of Australia's superannuation system. The stated objective of the overall set of arrangements is to introduce a new, low-cost superannuation product, known as MySuper, as a replacement for existing default superannuation fund products. The policy intention is that key elements of the MySuper regulatory framework will be introduced over a series of bills. What the MySuper regulatory framework is supposed to do is to provide for the wide availability of a low-cost superannuation product designed to be suitable, in particular, for those Australians who are not closely engaged with their superannuation.

If that is the broad intention of the legislative scheme and, indeed, of a key provision of this bill, the reality that I want
to draw to the attention of the House is that a key aspect of the bill before the House this afternoon is to give effect to the ongoing agenda of the Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation to entrench and strengthen the position of certain parts of the superannuation industry—namely, the industry and public sector funds, which are the funds which typically have a heavy union representation on their board. And that, in turn, will tend to weaken the position of other types of funds, particularly corporate and retail funds, and I will explain why that is.

I should hasten to add that the coalition holds no brief for any particular part of the superannuation sector. What we want to see is a competitive industry and a level playing field, because we believe that that is the best way to deliver the best outcomes for members of superannuation funds, and that should be the overriding policy consideration. It is hard, however—when one looks at the range of measures which have been introduced in the MySuper framework and in other things which have been pursued by the Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation—to overlook the fact that that the minister is a former director of AustralianSuper. So, too, is Senator Cameron a former director of AustralianSuper, as is the member for Charlton. The Labor candidate for the seat of Melbourne in the 2010 election, Ms Cath Bowtell, is also a former director of AustralianSuper, the largest of the industry super funds. I put it to the House that there is very unlikely to be any other economic entity in Australia which has four former directors who are either currently Australian Labor Party members of the federal parliament or who have sought in recent elections to become Australian Labor Party members of the federal parliament.

I want to make three points in the time available to me. Firstly, this bill would introduce provisions which set aside active choices which many, many Australians have made for their superannuation. Secondly, it does so in a stealthy and deceptive way. Thirdly, I want to put to the House that what needs to be done is for schedule 6 of this bill to be deleted or, at the very least, amended—and the opposition has moved amendments to give effect to this view.

Let me turn firstly to the proposition that what this bill does is to set aside active choices which many Australians have made about their superannuation. The key operative provision of this bill that I want to focus upon would have the effect of mandating that if you have put funds into a product which happens to be a default product of your superannuation fund then the relevant provision of this bill will have the effect of overriding an active choice which you may have made in putting your moneys into that default option.

I refer to the provisions in schedule 6 of the bill. These are the provisions which set out the requirement that existing member balances in superannuation funds are to be transferred into a MySuper product. So the context we are talking about is the way that this bill sets out the limits as to the kinds of superannuation holdings of Australians which will be captured by the provisions of the bill, should it pass into law, and which will thereby automatically be moved from the existing product in which those moneys are held and moved into a MySuper product.

The relevant provision is proposed section 20B of the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act. This is a section which will be inserted into that act if the bill before the House this afternoon passes into law. That proposed section introduces the new definition of ‘accrued default amount’, and it
is the definition of 'accrued default amount' which determines whether money that you hold in a superannuation fund is required to be transferred into a MySuper product.

The first limb of that definition is relatively straightforward. It is an amount in respect of which you have not exercised an investment choice. The second limb of the definition, however, is highly controversial because it extends to any amounts held in the default investment option of a superannuation fund. Critically, this limb will apply even if you, as a member of the superannuation fund, have made an active choice for that particular option.

Let me give an example to make the point clearer. Imagine your superannuation fund has five options, ranging from 'high growth' at one end down to 'capital stable' at the other end. And let us assume that the middle option is called 'balanced'. Let us also assume that it is the policy of that fund that if you make no active choice your money will go into the balanced option. The key point is that the provision of this bill we are speaking about today will operate in respect of any moneys held in the balanced option.

Some of the moneys held in that fund's balanced option will be there because the members of the fund whose money is in a balanced option have not made an active choice. But, in some cases, members will have made an active choice. They will have actively ticked the form and signed it. They will have ticked the form to choose the balanced option. Yet, as a consequence of the provisions in this bill, their choice will now be overridden. Their money will automatically be taken out of the balanced option and will automatically be put into the MySuper product which this fund is now required by law to provide.

The consequence of this is that people who believe, quite correctly, that they have made an active choice for their superannuation product are to be deemed by this legislation as not having made an active choice and, therefore, their balance will be automatically moved into a MySuper product. Why does this matter? It could matter for a host of reasons. The product into which they are moved may have a very different allocation of risk assets than the one they have chosen. Moving their money into the new product may compromise the continuity of their insurance cover under this superannuation scheme. It may compromise the continuity of their life insurance cover, their TPD, their total and permanent disability cover or their income insurance cover. It may expose them to transaction costs and fees as assets are sold and repurchased in the new fund. It may even potentially expose them to paying higher fees in the MySuper product than in the product they happen to be in right now. There may be all kinds of unforeseen consequences as a result of the policy decision this government has taken which we in the opposition fundamentally disagree with to actively override a specific and conscious choice which a fund member has made.

The second point I want to make is that the bill does all of this in a stealthy and deceptive way. It has been drafted in that fashion and, furthermore, the government has conducted itself in relation to this bill in a stealthy and deceptive way. I will turn firstly to the way that the bill has been drafted. It operates through an opt-out mechanism. That means that if your money is captured by the definition of an accrued default amount because it happens to sit in what happens to be the default allocation of that fund your money will automatically be transferred across to a MySuper account unless you actively respond in writing within a designated 90-day period to a notification
from the trustee. In other words, the trustee will write to you and say, 'We are about to move your funds into a different kind of product unless you come back to us and tell us not to do that.' As we all know, it is very easy to overlook communications from your financial institutions. All of us receive many of them every month and every year. The consequence of the way this bill is drafted is that, simply by failing to respond within 90 days, you will have your money moved from an account that you have actively chosen into a product you did not choose. Many Australians who have made an active choice are going to have that choice overridden.

I want to emphasise the point that this provision operates with considerably greater breadth than was proposed or contemplated by the Cooper review into superannuation and with greater breadth than was previously disclosed in prior ministerial statements. I put it to the House that, if this approach were taken by a private sector company seeking to change fundamental terms and conditions of its contract with a customer by writing to the customer and saying, 'Unless you come back to us within 90 days, we will automatically make this change,' the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission would be giving very careful scrutiny to what was going on. I and the rest of the opposition think that the drafting approach that has been taken here is not one that can be defended.

The second way in which this bill is sneaky and deceptive relates to the way the government has acted in developing this legislation. There was a truly deficient consultation process through the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services. This is a bill that goes for more than 100 pages and makes fundamental and controversial changes to Australia’s superannuation system, yet the total amount of consultation that the government permitted was a mere half-day of hearings with witnesses limited to just 30 minutes for each organisation.

Ms Michelle Levy of the Superannuation Committee of the Law Council of Australia had this to say as she described the work of her committee in responding to the parliamentary inquiry:

I will spend one minute on process. We, the committee, spend a lot of time trying to prepare careful responses to legislation and often the time period—and I know it is not just for us; it is for everybody—is just too short. It is not possible to prepare a well-reasoned and thought-through submission in a week. For the trustee obligations bill the submission timetable was shorter than the period within which the committee was meant to release its report. I suppose people have a lack of confidence in the system given this timing.

Unfortunately, this kind of truncated and inadequate consultation process and very, very rushed approach is all too typical of bills brought before the House by the Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation.

I want to highlight one particularly deceptive claim in the report produced by government members of this committee. At paragraph 4.5 the claim is made that there are two perspectives on the bill that the House is debating this afternoon: on one hand, the perspective of the retail funds and, on the other hand, the perspective of the industry and public sector funds. That claim is not right, as is evident from reading the submission made to the committee by a major public sector fund, First State Super, which has $32 billion in funds under management. It safeguards the retirement savings of New South Wales public servants.

Here is what First State Super had to say about the opt-out mechanism I described earlier:

… the Fund believes there is increased risk of a claim against the Fund in the event of a future
change to these members' investment options, counter to their explicit instructions and acknowledgement.

They went on to note their concern that the automatic movement of balances where members have not made an explicit choice will confuse members and said they will 'not respond favourably'. They said:

First State Super considers it more appropriate that the legislation allow for recognition of members who have made a full or partial investment choice …

The third point I want to make very briefly is that this bill is deficient and the only way to solve it is either to expunge schedule 6 completely or to amend it heavily, and we will move amendments that will have that effect.

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (16:07): I rise to support the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you have already been advised, this is one of three pieces of legislation that will be implemented by the government under its MySuper reforms as part of the Stronger Super program. The Stronger Super reform intends to make the process of everyday transactions in the superannuation system easier, cheaper and fairer, to improve the governance and integrity of our superannuation system and to increase community confidence in the self-managed superannuation funds within that sector.

This will be done through the MySuper default product, which all Australians will be able to rely upon. We have already introduced and passed two pieces of legislation necessary for the successful introduction of the MySuper product, the first being the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (MySuper Core Provisions) Bill 2011 and the second being the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Trustees Obligations and Prudential Standards) Bill, which was introduced earlier this year.

This bill is the last remaining aspect in respect of superannuation. It will give Australians access to the MySuper product from 1 July next year. MySuper is a simple, low-cost superannuation product designed to promote lower fees and more efficient superannuation funds with a particular focus on the benefits accruing to members. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you would appreciate, MySuper ensures that Australians have a fair system of accumulating superannuation. The standard will be required by regulation and also the types of fees that may be charged. In fact there will be only six types of fees that will exist under the product, compared with the veritable plethora of fees and scales that apply in the superannuation market at the moment.

This is part of a large-scale change to the superannuation system as we know it operating in this country. This government has made many positive reforms in the area of superannuation, including those enabled by the introduction of the mineral resource rent tax, which will provide for the superannuation guarantee to be lifted from nine to 12 per cent. This increase will be transitioned over the next decade, increasing the national pool of superannuation savings from $1.3 trillion at the moment for 8.5 million Australian workers by another $550 billion over the next 20-odd years. That is a significant net increase in the pool of national savings and it is only right in those circumstances that we ensure that that pool is properly regulated and that employees whose money is being contributed to their retirement savings are protected. That is why MySuper is so critical at this point in time. With this pool of savings, we will continue to enjoy being able to invest in capital-intensive and social infrastructure into the
future. This increased pool of savings will then go on to benefit all Australians.

Importantly, this superannuation savings pool works to address the issues of Australia's ageing population, assisting those who seek better opportunities in their retirement. After all, that was the very genesis of superannuation itself. I know it has had a rather tortuous history, and I might come to that a little bit later on, but superannuation is an ideal that has been sponsored for most Australian workers by a succession of Labor governments.

Mr Deputy Speaker Georganas, I will not comment on your age, but I put you in the category of baby boomers such as me. We are taking steps to live longer than our forebears may have done. The truth of the matter is that by the year 2050, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 25 per cent of Australians will be at retirement age. Therefore it is important that we have a pool of savings that provides for retirement. Otherwise, provisioning for the aged will simply fall to the remaining 75 per cent of taxpayers. So it is paramount for our nation's future and for our long-term sustainability to plan ahead, to ensure that we are prepared for those days. We must make appropriate plans for an ageing population and take appropriate steps to ensure that people are able to plan for sustenance in their retirement years. People work hard all their lives. They deserve to have the peace of mind of knowing that they will be able to retire with respect, dignity and comfort.

Low-income earners—and there are many in my electorate—will also significantly benefit from these provisions. In Fowler, some low-income earners fall even below the tax-free threshold, which has now been increased to $18,000. Those people, who are often working in a part-time capacity, will significantly benefit from this. For people who choose superannuation as their preferred saving model, this will ensure that their superannuation contributions are tax free. They will be exempt from the 15 per cent entry fee for superannuation contributions, which ensures fairness for them. This is a much fairer system of taxation on their superannuation. It will also act as an incentive for people on low to middle incomes to use superannuation as their preferred saving model.

I have said that the topic of superannuation is probably foreign to those on the other side, because after all it has been successive Labor governments that have championed it, going back for some time. Labor sponsored superannuation in 1986, when it was a Labor government that took the first steps to allow for award based superannuation. You would recall that, Mr Deputy Speaker. People were able to negotiate with their employers, but this freed up those who were covered by awards so they could go and get provisions and orders out of the Industrial Relations Commission to ratify contributions being made into superannuation. At that stage, it was three per cent. Back then it was effectively only the trade union movement, which was ostensibly covering award based employees, that was in a position to go out and get benefits for those employees in that respect. It did it by offsetting projected pay rises against superannuation. In those days, going back to 1986, various trade unions decided to forgo wage increases with a view to getting compulsory superannuation of three per cent established into their awards.

What followed was that the processes of the Accord established a pattern of superannuation guaranteed for all Australian workers. The significance of that was that it did not matter whether you were in a trade union or not, whether you were a white-collar worker or not; you were going to get
the benefits of superannuation. For many, that was probably the first time they had seen anything about a retirement fund being set up in their name. Apart from establishing a system that would allow every Australian worker to benefit from superannuation in their retirement, it also left a platform and a positive legacy for this country in developing a systematic savings pool for all Australians. Following the implementation of that, from 1988 onwards, we now have—I am not sure how many noughts we put on this—$1.3 trillion that has been saved in the names of Australian workers.

The superannuation system in this country has come a long way. When the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted its first survey into superannuation, back in 1974, only 32 per cent of the Australian workforce was covered by superannuation, and that was mainly made up of white-collar employees, managerial staff and state and Commonwealth public servants. Prior to 1974, very few employees had the benefit of superannuation. Since 1988, superannuation has applied to all Australian workers. It started off with the revolutionary three per cent, which was traded off against wage rises, and it is now at nine per cent. With the passage of this legislation, and with the effect of the minerals resource rent tax coming into play, the platform is now set for increasing superannuation from nine per cent to 12 per cent, which will more adequately provide for retirement incomes for Australians into the future.

We are now at another significant point in the superannuation revolution in this country. We are at a point of securing proper managerial control of superannuation funds, with appropriate transparency vested in those funds and the trustees required to ensure that the rights and privileges of the members of those funds are fully observed and that those trustees are held accountable. It is clear that we want to make sure not only that those funds are well managed but that the members are being appropriately served in this modern and dynamic environment. Through this bill, the government intends to minimise the unnecessary and unfair fees and charges that often make significant deductions to the savings pool of employees. The bill primarily deals with APRA's data collection powers and disclosure requirements, achieving some of the key objectives of Stronger Super. It also ensures that superannuation fund trustees transfer all accrued default amounts of members to MySuper products by 1 July 2017, with an opt-out option. The bill also provides the industry with the information it requires to lodge an application to offer a superannuation product from the beginning of next year.

These are significant developments. This is the third tranche of the Stronger Super provisions to ensure that Australian workers from all industries, from all occupations, have the benefit of security when it comes to their superannuation. The bill establishes rules in relation to fees for all superannuation funds—for instance, there will be a ban on entry and limited exit fees and switching fees and also other fee rules and rule structures. Setting up clear guidelines in relation to fees for all superannuation funds will ensure that members of MySuper products will not pay unnecessary fees and that their ability to make and achieve a choice is not hindered or encumbered by a nuisance fee structure.

It is also important to note that the bill sets guidelines in relation to MySuper products, particularly in respect of life and TPD—total and permanent disability—insurance, again giving safety to those members who find themselves in—(Time expired)

Debate adjourned.
Migration Legislation Amendment (Student Visas) Bill 2012

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with an amendment.

Ordered that the amendment be considered immediately.

Senate's amendment—

(1) Schedule 1, items 1 to 3, page 3 (lines 4 to 18), omit the items.

Mr Bowen (McMahon—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (16:23): I move:

That the amendment be agreed to.

In moving that this government amendment be agreed to, I point out to the House that the purpose of the amendment is to implement the recommendations of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee. This amendment removes the requirement in the Migration Legislation Amendment (Student Visas) Bill 2012 that updated contact information for all international students be given to the Secretary of the Department of Innovation, Industry, Research, Science and Tertiary Education within 14 days of a provider becoming aware of a change. This is in recognition of the recommendations made by the Senate committee and the concerns raised by peak education bodies in their submissions to the Senate committee.

The government will instead propose amendments to the Education Services for Overseas Students Regulations 2001 to ensure that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship receives access to updated student contact details on a six-monthly basis through an automated mechanism or, in the case of certain students, course variations. These proposed amendments are in keeping with the spirit of the recommendations made by the Senate committee.

The passage of this bill will ensure that student visa holders will no longer have to have their visas automatically cancelled and will provide for a fairer cancellation process. These measures also support the international education sector, which is one of Australia's largest export industries.

The passage of this bill will represent what is in effect the only legislation required to implement the recommendations of the Knight review of international education visa settings. This was a very important review commissioned by Minister Evans and me last year to deal with what has been a concerning downturn in relation to Australia's international education sector. We are very committed to ensuring the vibrancy and ongoing sustainability of Australia's international education sector.

As the Knight review itself made clear, there have been a number of factors, and they do not need to be exhaustively detailed in the House today. There have been the high value of the Australian dollar and reputational issues in relation to events affecting Indian students, and of course the government previously found it necessary, because of abuse, to change some international visa settings.

The recommendations of the Knight review are very good ones. Michael Knight consulted very broadly and very intensively in the international education sector. He travelled throughout Australia and to China, India and Malaysia as part of his review. He made a large number of recommendations, the most important of which are the automatic granting of poststudy work rights to people with bachelor's, master's or doctoral degrees, in relation to a bachelor's degree of two years duration, a master's of three years duration or a doctorate of four years duration. Of course, this does not replace the automatic 18-month visa for VET
or higher education students but is in addition to it. Importantly, this automatic poststudy work right is not related to the field of study. The person who has studied in Australia can work in any field. I think that this provides a very competitive product for Australia's universities and other institutions offering bachelor's degrees and above, to make them very competitive in the international market.

The other key recommendation was streamlined visa and entry processes for universities in the first instance. This has already been implemented and I think is working very well. This is something that has been very warmly welcomed by the university sector in particular. It makes sense that a university take some responsibility and, in return, get streamlined entry. The vast majority of universities—in fact, I would say every single university in Australia—wants to see not only good educational outcomes but good immigration outcomes and wants to ensure that their students, once they have finished their study, only stay in Australia with an appropriate visa.

There is, of course, an important imperative to ensure that this is delivered consistently across the world. There is a small challenge in doing this, when you consider the number of staff that the department of immigration has in many posts throughout the world considering applications from many countries. It is important that we do so in a consistent way. We have put in place measures to ensure that that is the case, and we will continue to monitor that.

Shortly I will be announcing how the government intends to expand this streamlined entry to other institutions. It is fairly straightforward with universities. There are a smaller number and all with a good immigration outcome. That is not the case with the vocational education and training sector, which has a lot of providers, the vast majority of which have good outcomes and do the right thing, but of course we always need to be careful that the outcomes are positive and good. Therefore we have been working to make sure that we get those settings right. I will be making further announcements about this in the not too distant future. International education is very important to universities, to providers, to our economy and to our long-term strategic best interest. I am very glad that these reforms are being implemented and being implemented in a timely way. (Time expired)

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (16:28): The coalition will be supporting the changes. One of the most important things we need for our international education industry now is stability, and the coalition supports the changes that have been put forward. It is imperative that we allow our educational institutions at a higher education level to be able to continue to go now about their business with confidence that their students can expect some continuity.

Question agreed to.

Higher Education Support Amendment (Streamlining and Other Measures) Bill 2012
Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered immediately.

Senate's amendments—

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (after table item 4), insert:

4A. Schedule 3A The day this Act receives the Royal Assent.

(2) Page 23 (after line 11), after Schedule 3, insert:
Schedule 3A—Student start up scholarship payments

Social Security Act 1991
1 Section 592H (note)
Repeal the note, substitute:

Note: The amount of the payment is to be indexed on 1 January 2017 and each later 1 January in line with CPI increases (see sections 1190 to 1194).

2 After subsection 1192(8)
Insert:

(8A) The student start up scholarship payment amount (see item 40 of the CPI Indexation Table in subsection 1191(1)) is not to be indexed on 1 January 2013, 1 January 2014, 1 January 2015 and 1 January 2016.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham—Parliamentary Secretary for Higher Education and Skills) (16:30): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

Before us is the Higher Education Support Amendment (Streamlining and Other Measures) Bill 2012, which has been returned to the House from the Senate. I want to speak about the context of the bill and deal with the amendments.

It should be clear to all in the House that the purpose of the bill is to provide legislative authority to the Australian government's higher education loan programs, which are commonly known and referred to as the HELP programs. There are of course two main streams—FEE-HELP and VET FEE-HELP. The purpose of the schemes is to assist individuals to access higher education and higher level vocational education by removing an up-front financial impost so that it does not act as a barrier for people when they are considering undertaking further study. In particular that is done by deferring those up-front tuition fees in a way that enables people to undertake to repay the fees when they are earning a level of income that would make that a manageable situation for them. I think it has stood the test of time as a way of managing the shared costs of higher education between government and individuals.

The bill before us sits within that framework and it is intended to enable the government to act on some recommendations that came out of a review of the VET FEE-HELP Assistance Scheme. That review reported in September 2011. As a result of the review and the report of the review, the government worked with the COAG process and in April 2012 produced the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform. So the amendments were put into the bill to enable the government to deliver the improvements to the scheme that were intended by that process of review under COAG.

The amendments in the bill enhance the quality and accountability framework that underpins the scheme. It was an important combination of seeking to streamline processes while at the same time ensuring the rigour and quality of the protections around the scheme that were in place. It allows the minister to consider information from the national and non-referring jurisdiction education regulators when making a decision whether to approve, revoke or suspend an education provider under the HELP schemes. So the intention of the amendments to the bill was to strengthen the government's ability to both protect the integrity of the schemes and to minimise risks to students and obviously to the public money involved in the schemes. The amendments enhance the existing provider suspension and revocation provisions for approved providers.

The amendments went further. They enabled the tertiary sector to deliver
education and training in a more responsive and flexible manner as a result of the amendments to the census date requirements to the legislative guidelines. That was to enable the higher education sector more broadly to be responsive to the industry's needs without having an onerous administration level added to the system and to the scheme. There was an important balance between flexibility and reducing red tape in the sector and also ensuring quality and ensuring protection of the student body and government moneys involved.

I was very pleased, when introducing the bill into the House, to announce that it enables a managed trial of VET FEE-HELP for certificate IV level qualifications. This is obviously an important extension from the diploma and associate diploma to the certificate IV level qualifications. These amendments strengthen the number of provisions to better support access to and administration of the schemes. They reduce complexity and duplication through consolidating three lots of legislative guidelines into a single set of guidelines. These important amendments in the bill allowed the minister to determine a category of providers and of financial reporting requirements for applicants and approved providers that represent a low risk to the government. (Extension of time granted) The combination of the streamlining provisions, which were about reducing red tape for post-secondary higher education VET providers and an important reform in extending the capacity for the VET FEE-HELP scheme to cover a wider range of relevant courses at the certificate IV level, were important intentions of the legislation before us.

This sits within the context whereby, when I originally spoke on the bill, I expressed some concerns about what was happening in the TAFE VET sector in Victoria—in particular, the significant reductions in funding that had occurred for Victorian TAFEs. We were at that time being presented across the media and by various student and teacher organisations—and, indeed, by our own local MPs from Victoria in this House—with the grave implications that was having for TAFE in Victoria, with campuses and courses being shut down and closed.

There was a foreshadowing of similar problems in New South Wales and Queensland. I will take this opportunity to report to the House that that is certainly the case. We have now seen in New South Wales potential devastation again of the TAFE system—with 800 jobs to go and fees to significantly rise. Day by day, I am hearing the implications of those costing cuts to TAFEs in New South Wales and cuts to delivery of services to the regions. It is particularly appalling and a bit surprising that some of the regional members on the other side, who in the past have been strong supporters of the public education provider and TAFE, can be silent with their state colleagues in this particularly short-sighted cutting away of the public provider and TAFEs—not only in Victoria but also in New South Wales and Queensland. Indeed, in Queensland we have seen the response to the report recommending the closure of a significant number of TAFEs, which potentially will see half the TAFEs in Queensland shut down.

This will be felt most strongly and most significantly in regional and rural areas of all three states. I would argue that it is a devastating blow not only for the economies of regional and rural communities—both in the provision of training and education and the employment creation that goes with them and the flow-on effects to the economies of those small towns—but also for the economies of the states more broadly. One of the great strengths of every state—indeed, of
the nation—is our people. It is a theme and a commitment that this government has consistently talked about and consistently delivered on. We have significant additional money rolling out into our vocational education and training sector from the federal government. I have spent an enormous amount of time visiting TAFEs in my new role and have seen the new physical facilities that capital injections from the federal government have provided and how important they are for students and for industries. I would argue that it is extraordinarily short sighted of state Liberal governments of the eastern seaboard, both socially and economically, to be cutting away and destroying the foundation of the public provider in the vocational education and training sector at this critical time. Sadly, I cannot inform the House that the news has got any better since my original contribution on the bill. Indeed, it has only got worse.

We now have before us some amendments to the bill, as members would be aware. I would like to take the opportunity to thank members of this House who have spoken on the Higher Education Support Amendment (Streamlining and Other Measures) Bill 2012 over the various stages of consideration. It is important to understand that the bill as a whole strengthens and streamlines the government’s income contingent loans programs and it achieves savings for the government. The government’s amendments to the bill will amend the Social Security Act of 1991. This is to allow a freeze on indexation of the Student Start-up Scholarship for the period of 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2016. To make it clear: consequently, the maximum amount payable under the Student Start-up Scholarship will remain at the 2012 rate. The current rate is $2,050 and it will remain at that rate until 1 January 2017. (Extension of time granted)

The Labor measure is a carefully targeted measure. It is intended to respond to the current fiscal environment and it is intended to achieve significant savings while having a minor impact on individual students. Acknowledging the needs of students from regional Australia is important to the government, and it is an important part of the issues I have attempted to cover in this section of the bill. What we are doing is freezing the amount payable under the Student Start-up Scholarship; the Relocation Scholarship will not be affected. I should also make it clear that other student income support payments will not be affected by the bill.

In closing, I take the opportunity to make the point that the government remains committed to an expanding and strong vocational education and training sector. The government wants to ensure that the higher education sector more broadly is able to function effectively for students so that they are not put off the studies they want to undertake because of up-front fees and that we provide a rigorous help scheme for students in both higher education and vocational education and training. We as a government want to continue to increase the number of students in both sectors. We have also had significant increases in the numbers of students receiving income support or loan assistance. That is a great achievement and we remain committed to that participation and equity in both educational sectors. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr OAKESHOTT (Lyne) (16:43): I will be brief. I have followed the debate in the Senate and I will, in a somewhat lonely way, be opposing the government amendments on the Student Start-up Scholarship. I do think education is an investment and I do think this is a really important part of trying to engage regional communities in future opportunities. I do think vocational education is a very
important part of the story of building collaboration across sectors and providing pathways for students from secondary schools on to tertiary education or into the workforce.

I am particularly concerned about the language that the government is using—that is, that the student scholarship start-up deferrals will only have a minor impact and that the deferrals are based on 'the current fiscal environment'. According to everything I hear from government, the current fiscal environment is pretty good. I hear of a AAA rating. I hear that the terms of trade are at record highs. I hear that interest rates are low. I hear that inflation is in-band. But the message is inconsistent: if the current fiscal environment is indeed so good, why are we making access to education for certain students harder?

Mr HockeY: You're starting to come over!

Mr Oakeshott: No, I think I am the last of the Mohicans: I am arguing the case that the current fiscal environment is so good that we should not be deferring the student start-up scholarship. That is exactly why I will be opposing these amendments. I am disappointed that, while government is advocating at many levels for greater equity of access to education and for education reform, this amendment is not an example of such advocacy and is if anything a step backwards. I will be opposing the amendments.

Mr HockeY (North Sydney) (16:46): I have a few points to make following the intervention by the member for Lyne. I am almost in agreement with him: the fiscal environment—that is, the government's budget—is meant to be in good shape. However, while the member for Lyne was briefed on the mining tax and therefore may have a better understanding than any of us have about just how much revenue the mining tax is actually raising, I suspect that it will raise hardly a dollar—though I would be happy to facilitate the member for Lyne's disclosing to the House how much money the government thinks it is going to make from the mining tax. I also suspect that the fiscal environment is quite poor, because the government, whilst it is promising a surplus, is failing to deliver one. When the government runs out of money, it turns to new taxes and on-the-run expenditure cuts, and that is when you see the true state of the underlying structural deficit.

It is amazing, isn't it, that as soon as the member for Lyne gets to his feet—whooshka!—next to him rushes the Leader of the House ready to be in his ear: 'Don't go wrong. Don't let us go.' The member for Lyne only needs to get on his feet, and he gets the full attention of the Leader of the House and minister for transport. If only those people who are advocates of a second airport in the Sydney basin could get the very same reaction from the minister for transport.

Mr Albanese: I'm on board.

Mr HockeY: Speak up, then. The fiscal environment, I suspect, is as bad as the necessity of this amendment from the government would suggest, and the economic environment, which the government boasts is terrific, is not terrific. That is why interest rates have been coming down. Interest rates have not been coming down because the economy is doing really well but because the economy is underperforming. The government fails to understand the impacts that the recklessness of its decision-making has on the broader community, and the impacts caused by these amendments to the bill will be just further examples.
Ms BIRD (Cunningham—Parliamentary Secretary for Higher Education and Skills) (16:48): I rise to address some of the issues that have been raised. The contribution to the debate at the end diverged somewhat from the bill. I understand that the shadow Treasurer cannot help himself getting up and talking the economy down again when somebody praises the state of the economy, and I was happy for two minutes of the debate to be devoted to allowing the shadow Treasurer to do so.

I served with the member for Lyne on the education committee of this House, and I appreciate that he shares with me an understanding of and commitment to the capacity of education to transform not only individual lives but also the regions of this country and the opportunities to be found within them. Like me, the member for Lyne comes from a region where there is concern about youth unemployment, and he shares with me an understanding that the ability of young people to access higher education—TAFEs, VET and university—makes a significant difference in their lives. So I understand where the member for Lyne was coming from with his contribution.

However, I make the point to him that the student start-up scholarship which is being addressed in the amendments to this bill was introduced in April 2010 as a new payment. It was introduced for the very reasons that the member outlined—that is, to provide some upfront assistance with the costs of things such as textbooks and equipment, the money to pay for which at the start of the university year is a concern for students when they come out of the Christmas holidays and see the list and how much everything is going to cost.

Mr Hockey: I thought they had a computer for that.

Ms BIRD: Indeed the member is quite right: there is a range of costs associated with starting university life.

Mr Hockey: Why are they buying books instead of a computer?

Ms BIRD: If the member wants to ask me why they are buying books instead of computers, I suggest that he discuss with universities their reading lists. I do not set them; I just know what the reality is for uni students. The member, as his children get older, will come to know only too well that the costs at the beginning of the university year are not small.

As I said, the start-up scholarships were a new initiative in 2010. They are an important support to students. I cannot agree with the underlying assessment by the member for Lyne that the decision to put a freeze on the scholarships until January 2017 is pulling away support. The government has a record of providing new placement opportunities, of massively increasing student places in universities and vocational education and training and of providing significant additional financial support to assist students—so many of whom are now eligible for youth allowance and Austudy. The government has a really good track record in the area of education, and it is not unreasonable to freeze the scholarships until January 2017. While I appreciate the intention of the member for Lyne’s contribution, I argue that the freezing of the scholarship is, rather than an impost on students, the continuation of a support payment that did not even exist before April 2010. The government will continue to provide important support to students in meeting their costs of living.

Question agreed to.
Superannuation Legislation Amendment (MySuper Core Provisions) Bill 2012

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered immediately.

Senate's amendments—

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (after table item 1), insert:

1A. Schedule The day this Act receives the
1, item 1A Royal Assent.

(2) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 3, column 2), omit "However, if the provision(s) do not
commence before 1 January 2013, they
commence on that day."

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation
and Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations) (16:52): I move:

That the amendments be considered
immediately.

Question agreed to.

Mr SHORTEN: I move:

That the
amendments be agreed to.

On 3 November 2011, I introduced the
Superannuation Legislation Amendment
(MySuper Core Provisions) Bill 2012. Australia's superannuation savings pool
stands at nearly $1.46 trillion and it grew 13
per cent over the year to September 2012.
You hear a lot of doom and gloom in some
parts of the Australian media about our
superannuation, but the fact our retirement
savings grew at a double-digit rate should
give Australians confidence.

Last week ANZ launched its new Smart
Choice superannuation product, which has
been designed with the government's
MySuper and Stronger Super reforms in
mind. This, together with the ING Living
Super launch I attended in September, gives
a clear signal that the industry is embracing
the MySuper reforms and launching new
simple and affordable products.

A bill that provides tax relief for fund
mergers—the so-called roll-over relief—has
also passed the parliament. This will benefit
millions of Australians because it removes a
tax barrier that could have prevented
otherwise viable fund mergers from
proceeding. Again, another win in terms of
cost and efficiency.

This was soon followed by the passage of
a very significant reform for trans-Tasman
relations that will establish trans-Tasman
retirement savings portability. New
Zealanders who move to Australia will now
be able to consolidate their New Zealand
retirement savings with their Australian
superannuation benefits. Similarly,
Australians moving to New Zealand, and
New Zealanders returning home, will be able
to take their Australian benefits with them, to
consolidate with their New Zealand
retirement savings. This reform will help the
thousands of Australians and New
Zealanders who move across the Tasman Sea
each year. They will be able to consolidate
their retirement savings in their country of
residence and avoid paying fees and charges
on accounts in the two countries. This will
help literally tens of thousands of New
Zealanders who moved to Australia in the
last year and the 14,000 Australians who
have moved to New Zealand.

The Superannuation Legislation
Amendment (MySuper Core Provisions) Bill
2012 delivers the government's 2010 election
commitment to introduce a new simple, low-
cost default superannuation product called
MySuper. The MySuper reforms will put
downward pressure on superannuation fees
and they are a significant step towards
enhancing the arrangements for workers'
retirement savings. It reflects the Gillard Labor government's commitment to improving the efficiency, competition, transparency and governance arrangements for the superannuation industry.

The bill amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 to provide that trustees are able to apply to the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority for authorisation to offer a MySuper product. The bill passed the House on 22 August 2012 and the Senate passed this bill on 22 November 2012, after making some technical amendments to the commencement provisions.

When the bill passed the House it provided that the provisions allowing funds to apply for authorisation for a MySuper product would commence on 1 January 2013, unless an earlier day was fixed by proclamation. In other words, the bill allowed applications to offer a MySuper product to commence from no later than 1 January 2013. However, key requirements for an application to offer a MySuper product are contained in the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012. Applications to offer a MySuper product should not commence until that bill has passed. Therefore, the amendments agreed to by the Senate are important as they change the day on which the bill commences to a single day fixed by proclamation, which will ensure that applications for a MySuper product will not commence until those key requirements of a MySuper application in the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012 have also come into effect. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (16:56): One of my favourite movies is The Hunt for Red October. There is a great scene at the end of the movie—and Dr Jensen would appreciate it, given his understanding of military issues—in which the Soviets have lost a new class of submarine, which is what The Hunt for Red October is all about. In the scene at the end of the movie the Soviet ambassador goes to the office of the Secretary of Defense, I think it was, and says, 'Mr Secretary, we have lost another submarine.' The Secretary of Defense says, 'Mr Ambassador, are you telling me we have lost another submarine?' and so the conversation goes. Well, here we have another amendment by the government to its own legislation. It is like The Hunt for Red October; it is the search for yet another mistake by the old Soviet Empire—not much different from the current equivalent we have on the Treasury benches today.

The government said that the commencement provisions within the bill state that it will start no later than 1 January 2013, but now they are changing it again; and when the bill becomes an act it will be on the day of proclamation. This is all pretty embarrassing for the government, but it is no surprise really.

I am a little disappointed in the performance of the Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation. It is not the first time we have had trouble with commencement dates, as we did with FOFA. Now we know that the Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation has failed to track his own legislation. He is now creating last-minute amendments in the Senate to a bill that relies on the passage of a bill currently before the House. All of this is to prevent industry from having to rely, for its guidance, on the passage of legislation that is yet to go through this hung parliament. So this is another example of the shambolic nature of the passage of legislation through this place.
I am glad the parliamentary secretary is at the table. He has just put out a media release in relation to unclaimed money. The Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012 was a bill which, according to him, was absolutely urgent—which had to be rushed through the House of Representatives on the Thursday of the last sitting. On the floor of this House, members clearly illustrated their discomfort with rushing it through. But now the parliamentary secretary has said that the government are making a huge number of changes to the unclaimed money and other measures bill and that they are going to try and ram those changes through. So you can see that the government are a shambolic mess when it comes to legislation. They are constantly amending their own legislation in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. They state to the Australian people that certain legislation must be dealt with urgently and then we find, as a result of the most cursory consideration of a bill before the chamber, that the government have to make further amendments simply to tread water in the passage of their legislation. In relation to the unclaimed money and other measures bill, we will look very closely at the proposed amendments and we will reserve our position.

On this one, however, we are going to save the minister from himself. He tries hard, the Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation. He really does put in a sterling effort. He gives it his all. He does not quite cut the mustard, but we in the coalition are feeling exceedingly generous today. We try to help this minister through all of these problems. We know that he does not understand.

Mr Shorten: That is very generous of you. I will try to improve.

Mr HOCKEY: I see it as to our advantage to make him look good at the moment. I am on the 'Bill for leader' campaign and I am trying to do my level best to try to help him look a little bit better. So the coalition is not going to oppose this. No matter how flawed it may be, we think we can live with a change to the commencement date in order to help this minister through yet another bungle which is going to have an impact on Australian business.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): I thank the member for North Sydney. I call—

Mr Hockey: It is he who should be thanking me.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation and Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations) (17:01): I thank the member for North Sydney for getting up this morning, I thank him for being here and I thank him for the efforts he makes on his side. The reason we are putting this amendment forward is because we continue to consult with industry—

Mr Katter: Would the member for North Sydney describe himself as a kind and generous person?

Mr Hockey: Yes, I would.

Mr SHORTEN: I will return to the bill. I am sorry to interrupt the—

Mr Hockey: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please do not abuse it.

Mr Hockey: I thought the member for Kennedy was very fair and I wanted to make sure his comment was properly recorded in Hansard.

Mr SHORTEN: The government is committed to reforming superannuation and we continue to do that. The member for
North Sydney, in speaking against the amendment, has challenged the government's bona fides in superannuation. Thank goodness Labor are in government in Australia, because we are the ones lifting superannuation from nine per cent to 12 per cent. Thank goodness Labor are in government, because we are the ones reforming financial planning laws so that people can have greater confidence in the advice they are getting. Thank goodness Labor are in government, because we are the ones who abolished the discrimination against people over 70 who are employees—they will be able to get superannuation. Thank goodness Labor are in government, because we are the ones abolishing the tax on superannuation contributions made by people who earn less than $37,000 a year. This last issue falls into the coalition's Bermuda Triangle of policy, where ideas mysteriously disappear into the opposition's policy think tank—if that is not a tautology. What is the opposition's policy on abolishing the 15 per cent tax paid by people who earn less than $37,000 a year?

Perhaps it is the member for North Sydney's personal philosophy not to always be mindlessly negative, given that they are not opposing this amendment. Perhaps we do see the hand of Hockey here—the hand of North Sydney—cooperating on policies which make sense, which this one does. We will continue to negotiate with industry, we will continue to negotiate with the opposition and we will continue to make our superannuation system the envy of the world.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Fair Entitlements Guarantee Bill 2012
Dental Benefits Amendment Bill 2012
Returned from Senate
Message received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.

Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012
Second Reading
Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (17:05):
It was interesting to listen to the member for North Sydney. With all due respect to him, it is extraordinary that the coalition always default to the reds under the bed scenario when they have objections to what this side of the House is doing—it is default to the fifties. While I agree with him that The Hunt for Red October is one of the great movies, and I enjoyed watching it again last night—for the hundredth time, as I told my husband—I do take issue with the claim that this government is a red under the bed and akin to a Soviet government. We are the party which has, when in government, implemented massive reform in every area of this nation. In the eighties we liberalised and deregulated the economy. That set us up for the great prosperity we enjoy today. One of the fabulous reforms we introduced then, and which we are now improving, was superannuation. And that is what I am here to discuss.

It was also interesting to hear the minister talk about some of the improvements industry is engaging in—embracing the reform program we are implementing. These reforms on superannuation are incredibly important for Australians. Our superannuation system has transformed the way Australians now approach saving for
their retirement. What I am finding so heartening is the fact that younger people, who have their working lives ahead of them and who do not traditionally focus on what life will be like when they retire, are now taking an interest in these issues. I know that when I first began my working life, issues such as super—not that super was really around then—and what savings provisions I had in place were not really front of mind. I was more focused on getting educated and then saving up for a house. Now we are finding that young people are starting to focus on their super and their retirement, and we are particularly finding that in the broader community. But more work needs to be done and that is what we are trying to do with these reforms and improvements we are talking about today.

I am a very strong advocate of superannuation and I have been actively working in my community to ensure that people understand their superannuation and also, most importantly, gain a greater financial literacy and a greater understanding of their financial affairs. With the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, I have held in my electorate financial literacy seminars which have been incredibly well-received. I again thank the parliamentary secretary for that. We received incredibly erudite and well-considered questions from the Canberra community. I have also held a number of small business seminars on how to set up a small business, with colleagues of mine from around Canberra. Next year—I was hoping to do it this year but have run out of time—I will be holding a number of seminars on how to read your superannuation and financial statements. As I have said, one of my great interests and missions is to improve the financial literacy of the people of Canberra about their financial affairs—their superannuation, their bank balance and small business. I have also set up with the member for Wright the Parliamentary Friends of Small Business Group, and I am looking forward to small business coming to talk to the group in a bipartisan way about the range of challenges they are facing and to highlight some of their achievements and innovations.

As I said, financial literacy is a mission of mine. Last year I gave to a group of women a speech called 'Finance is a feminist issue.' I am concerned about financial literacy across the broader community but particularly for women. I am sending this message out to the sisters: a man is not a financial plan. I have a number of statistics here that underscore the fact that women do need to start focusing on their superannuation. Women are more likely to be reliant on the age pension, with women representing 70.6 per cent of all single age pensioners, and 60 per cent of women are retiring with no super at all. For those receiving super, the Australian Bureau of Statistics tells us that the current average super payout for women continues to be significantly less than a man’s—about $198,000 for men and $112,600 for women. ABS data on retirement shows another important trend—that women in retirement have to go back to work to support themselves. Older workers are a boon to the economy. I know that Minister Ellis has been doing a lot of work in the last few weeks, and I applaud her for that, on getting older and mature workers back into the workforce. I have been doing my bit in my electorate office, employing older people, particularly men, who are finding it difficult to get work, and I applaud the range of initiatives that Minister Ellis has been undertaking in that area as well. Forty-two per cent of women are returning to work after retiring because they do not have enough money in their super account—they need to work for financial reasons. That is of real concern to me. Australia’s participation rate in super of
60 per cent for women is extremely low by international standards, with the World Economic Forum placing us 44th in the world for women's participation in the work force.

Those chilling figures underscore the fact that, sisters, we need to grip it up—you need to grip it up and you need to understand your superannuation and you need to plan for a comfortable retirement. I have women coming into my electorate office who are working beyond the age that they planned to retire because they do not have enough super. Quite often they are women who do not even have a house; they are not paying off a mortgage but are renting. They face a bleak retirement, having to live in public housing or having to be in the private rental market, which is particularly expensive, while at the same time living off the pension and a pretty meagre super. I also have women coming in who are sleeping in the back of cars. It is not pretty for a lot of women out there, and that is because of the financial difficulties they are facing.

This can happen to any group of women. A few weeks ago I caught up with an old high school girlfriend of mine who I have known since I was 13. In her 20s, because she did not take charge of the finances in the household and understand what was going on with the bank balances, she missed the fact that her husband had a bad gambling problem and was taking out loans in batches of $3,000. She was going through some paperwork somewhere and she found all these loans of $3,000 with one bank, $3,000 with another and $3,000 with another. It was only then that she saw the cold hard truth of what was happening with her marriage and her husband. I have another friend who was not keeping an eye on the finances and her husband has gone through tens of thousands of dollars on a range of items. It is important that women particularly, given the stats I read out before, grip this up and understand what superannuation they need for their future, what they have got at the moment and how they are going to reach their target. I understand that women take breaks in their career because they want to be at home with their babies. I get all that and I am not in any way suggesting that they cannot do that—

Mr Katter: You don't sound too happy about it though.

Ms Brodtmann: No, I think it is wonderful that they are doing that. I think it is wonderful that they are taking time off to have their babies. But, when they do go back to work, they need to throw the money in to ensure that they have a comfortable retirement.

As I said, and as the member for Kennedy just said, this is not unique to women. There are also men in this position. I know that there are men in my office who find superannuation to be a bit of a blind spot, a bit of white noise, and that is why it is important that the whole community take notice of what is actually happening with their superannuation. I have been out in the electorate and talking to people at a number of mobile offices and festivals just recently, and I have had men coming up to me and thanking me for the seminars that they have attended where I have made speeches strongly advocating for them to come to grips with this. They have started putting extra money into their superannuation accounts and they have noticed a huge difference, so they have thanked me for that. So this is a message to all Australians, not just to women. But, given those stats, women's superannuation is a real concern for me.

As I have said, Labor have a history of superannuation reform and we have always been committed to building a sustainable retirement savings base for all Australians. In
the nineties, Prime Minister Keating introduced what is hailed as one of the most revolutionary economic changes in Australia, the nine per cent superannuation payment for workers, and this established the universal super scheme that we have today. Now the Gillard government are continuing that process of reform with the Stronger Super legislation. We have introduced substantial reforms, and the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations just outlined some of those. They include improving the way that super is processed, to reduce costs for funds and their members so that more workers have more money in their accounts; the very important initiative of finding lost super; consolidating multiple accounts—very, very important; and improving the duties of trustees.

It is worth reminding the House that the minister also recently announced a 14 per cent reduction in the amount of unclaimed lost super, which is a major achievement. I know that many of my colleagues have run series of seminars and lost super programs to get their constituents to identify theirs. The total amount of unclaimed super is a staggering $17.4 billion. In my electorate of Canberra, the total amount of unclaimed super is $188 million. That is a lot of money that is just sitting there, lazily, not doing anything for a lot of Australians, including Canberrans. In the electorate of Fraser, in just one postcode, there is a significant amount of lost super; it is $32 million. That is why this government has been extremely active in helping unite Australians with their lost super and it is why Minister Shorten's announcement of a 14 per cent reduction in lost super is a real achievement, and I congratulate him.

Turning to the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012, I want to briefly go through each schedule, because they contain important reforms and improvements. Schedule 1 introduces new rules that will mean that members of the MySuper products are not paying unnecessary fees and will limit other fees that could have inhibited a member's ability to make active choices. Schedule 2 covers the insurance arrangements for the MySuper products. This is particularly important, and again I send this message to Canberrans and all other Australians: please take out TPD insurance and life insurance if you get the choice, particularly in industry superannuation schemes. I really like this opt-out clause, because it does mean that people will be protected, and it is only a very small fee as well, from memory—just from my own industry super fund. With what private insurance brokers are charging, there is just no comparison. So I really commend that element of the legislation.

Schedule 3 introduces new data collection and publication powers for APRA—again a welcome initiative, particularly the product dashboard on the websites of super funds. Schedule 4 delivers amendments to the Fair Work Act. Schedule 5 exempts defined benefit funds, those lovely defined benefit arrangements, from the MySuper regime. Schedule 6 requires trustees of super funds to transfer default amounts to members, which is very important.

This bill is another example of Labor's commitment to ensuring we have a fair, regulated superannuation industry in Australia, an industry that Australians can have faith in as they work hard to save for their retirement. As I have said many times before, superannuation is a Labor policy through and through. It was a Labor government that first introduced superannuation, and this Labor government is continuing to make reforms and improvements to it. I commend the bill to the House.
Debate adjourned.

Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012
Second Reading
Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr DUTTON (Dickson) (17:20): The Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 covers a number of areas; I want to start, though, with the non-contentious ones, if you like. The first is in relation to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991, which is a good example of cross-Tasman cooperation. Food safety, labelling, additives, energy and foods are addressed through the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. Amendments in 2010 to the food standards act created referencing inaccuracies which this bill intends to address.

Food from Australia and New Zealand enjoys a reputation for high quality in both domestic and international markets. It is important that our regulatory regime supports the continuation of that reputation—although it is interesting that the amendments were not dealt with at the time of the original changes in 2010.

This bill also raises the issue of medical training by seeking to amend the Health Insurance Act 1973 to include Medicare benefits for supervisors of trainee medical specialists. Australians benefit from world-class medical specialists. The training of new specialists is naturally required to meet attrition and to grow our nation's specialist medical workforce. The supervision of trainee medical specialists is an important part of the professional development of the next generation of specialists. As a nation, we need to ensure that there are no impediments to such training and all parties involved are appropriately remunerated.

As described in the explanatory memorandum, this amendment provides that a professional service performed by a specialist trainee under the supervision of another medical practitioner is deemed to have been undertaken by the supervising medical practitioner. This ensures that the supervising medical practitioner attracts the Medicare benefit for the professional service. Normally, only the medical practitioner performing the service is able to attract the Medicare benefit. Since 2011, delegated legislation has enabled this process. This amendment will create primary legislation for that purpose.

Of course, the training of medical specialists is only one of many issues that need to be addressed in relation to our health workforce. Unfortunately this is another area of the health portfolio which has been touched by the health minister's management style. The minister is fond of character assassination of the Leader of the Opposition—so much so, I think, that her portfolio is neglected. And why? Well, you only have to look at their respective legacies to understand why this minister would seek to denigrate Tony Abbott's outstanding performance as health minister. The contrast is indeed very telling.

The Leader of the Opposition was responsible for delivering nine new medical schools to build our medical workforce. The current health minister failed to plan ahead for internships for trainee doctors. This issue should not have been a surprise to an attentive minister. Australia should not export world-class medical graduates that we desperately need for our own nation, all because the minister failed to plan ahead. Similarly, Tony Abbott set up the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, which has invested billions of dollars into dental care for those needing it most. The current minister ripped out a billion dollars from dental care. Tony
Abbott's investments in policies as health minister achieved excellent outcomes in many other areas of the portfolio, including the introduction of graphic health warnings on cigarette packs. This made a significant contribution to the coalition achieving a dramatic reduction in smoking from 23.8 per cent in 1995 to 16.6 per cent in 2007. In government, the coalition presided over substantial investment in health, going from $19½ billion in 1995-96 to $51.8 billion in 2007-08, meaning Tony Abbott left the portfolio having completed this 166 per cent rise in health funding. This pattern was repeated across the portfolio. Indeed, child immunisation was dramatically increased from a low of 52 per cent in 1995 for 0-to-6-year-olds to an all-time high of 90 per cent of children aged 12 to 15 months being fully immunised. In just two years to November 2005, under the Strengthening Medicare initiative, 750 GP practices began to employ nurses. Tony Abbott initially boosted medical research infrastructure by $200 million and then followed that up with a massive commitment in the 2006-07 budget for $500 million for the National Health and Medical Research Council and $170 million for new research fellowships. Contrast that to this minister, who presided over claims of ripping money out of medical health and research in the last budget in May last year. As minister, Tony Abbott put an extra $2 billion into our nation's hospitals. Tanya Plibersek has ripped out $1.6 billion from hospitals in MYEFO this year alone.

This bill also amends the Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Act 1989. The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service have a mammoth task in protecting our nation. It is important that the legislative framework they rely upon keeps pace with their operations. This bill seeks to amend the Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Act 1989 to reflect how chemicals are actually kept under the control of customs during transhipment. Transhipment of chemicals involves the import of a chemical into Australia with the express intention of re-exporting the chemical without opening the package, within 30 days. The bill removes the requirement that Customs keep the chemical at the port or airport during the period of transhipment. Given the government's challenges in relation to border protection—which are anything but routine, and of their own making—relatively routine matters such as this seem to be the extent of what the government is able to competently manage.

That leaves us with the contentious issue of this bill—that is, the issue surrounding Medicare. It is Labor's latest health hiccup. Medicare is a brand which belongs to the Australian people and, as the law currently stands, the use of the name 'Medicare' is protected by section 41C of the Human Services (Medicare) Act 1973. That creates an offence for the use of the name 'Medicare' in connection with a business, trade, profession or occupation.

In 2010, when the member for Griffith was Prime Minister and the Attorney-General was then health minister, they initiated a so-called health reform agenda. It is now a matter of public record that their working relationship was less than ideal and, no doubt, that was part of the reason why health reform never really got off the ground. Labor's health agenda included primary healthcare organisations to be known as Medicare Locals. Medicare Locals have since been established as companies, and I am advised that these entities may be guilty of an offence pursuant to section 41C. Indeed, item 22 of this bill seeks to repeal subsection 41C(6) and replace it with an exemption from offence provisions for activity authorised by the secretary or a prescribed delegate. This has the clear
purpose of retrospectively legalising the government's franchising of the Medicare brand to Medicare Locals and also gives the government great scope for similar future activities.

The reason I say that this is the latest Labor health hiccup is that this government obviously, when they dreamt up the idea of Medicare Locals, were assisted by the same advisers who talked about Fuelwatch and GroceryWatch. Really, it was a pitch to the average Australian; it was not founded in trying to deliver better health services.

Indeed, when you talk to many of the Medicare Local offices around the country, they are at pains to point out that they did not want to be called Medicare Locals. They do not deliver medical services at a Medicare Local. They do not process Medicare claims at a Medicare Local. You cannot go in off the street with your sick child to a Medicare Local to claim back or to seek advice about a Medicare claim or a visit to a doctor or specialist. That is not what a Medicare Local is about. And this government, in quickly getting policy together which branded these things as Medicare Locals, gave no consideration to the value of the brand of Medicare this country has known for a long period of time. Really, they were about a cheap line in a Sunday newspaper. This has come back to bite this government because what they did in the process was to set up a potential breach of the act—their own act—by these entities which have been set up as companies and are failing to meet the legislation, it seems, and that is why the government seeks to move in relation to this matter.

I have put on the public record in the past that I do support some form of coordination at a primary care level. The game as we continue to age as a population, the game as we continue to have this rapid onset of chronic disease, is to manage care as best as we can and try to keep people away from tertiary settings. That is the aim of private providers, health insurance and medical products; equally, it is the aim of people within the public sector. We must as a country make sure that we provide every assistance to those people, so it is right that we have some form of primary care coordination.

That indeed is the reason Tony Abbott established a different network, the Divisions of General Practice, which provided coordination of task and role to provide assistance to GP services. But the delivery of primary care otherwise has to be targeted in a fashion whereby we can keep people away from expensive tertiary settings, where they are inclined to pick up a common bug in a public hospital, particularly if they are an older patient. For all of these reasons, which have been well documented, which go beyond these couple of reasons, it has to be the task to make sure that we keep people away from tertiary hospitals if that is at all possible. We support a coordination role but what we do not support is the mushrooming of bureaucracy and the huge cost that goes with that. That seems to underscore every single judgement this government makes. We want to make sure we can get money back into the hands of patients. We want to make sure that doctors and nurses get to deliver services that are going to help these patients.

Let us look at the Gillard government record on health. People think: 'A Labor government should be good at health. They are not good at the economy, they are not good at education, they are not good at inspiring business to invest and grow, because they keep whacking these great big new taxes on Australian industry. So, surely, they must be good at health.' But it is interesting to look at the record of the Gillard
government on health. They have cut $2.8 billion by means-testing private health insurance rebates and a further $700 by not paying the rebate on private health insurance increases above CPI. They have cut $390 million by completely removing rebates from lifetime health cover loading. They have robbed over $1 billion in dividends from Medibank that should have been putting downward pressure on premiums. Another $1 billion has been cut from the dental health scheme by abandoning chronically ill patients who are now lining up on public lists and will wait in pain a lot longer to receive those services. In some cases, those people will not receive those dental services at all. There have been hundreds of million of dollars in multiple cuts to the Medicare safety net, including obstetrics and IVF. That is the record of the Gillard government. They have limited the number of new medicines going onto the PBS by politicising the process and ignoring the independent evaluation of those listings and the ultimate advice that flows to government to list those drugs, in some cases to make for a much better life or transform the lives of sick patients.

The Gillard government also dramatically cut, by $1.6 billion, the health payments to states and territories only a few weeks ago when the Treasurer announced the MYEFO. And the reason that this is particularly offensive to Australian patients is that many of the cuts come in this financial year alone. This is the case. I was in a regional hospital in Geelong last week. That hospital had already budgeted for this financial year but is going to have money ripped away from it for proceedings it has already performed over the last six months. What sort of government says to a health service in regional Victoria or in regional Queensland, or to an Indigenous community in the Northern Territory, 'You've set your budget for this financial year. We're now going to come along now and cut part of that budget out'? That is an unacceptable arrangement for anybody and it raises the issue quite dramatically in my mind of sovereign risk. It is one of the hallmarks, sadly, of this government.

You cannot say to health services, 'We want you to continue to perform elective surgery and to put on doctors and nurses and open up extra beds and perform extra work to try to help people alleviate some of the pain that they might have because they have got a bung knee or need a hip replacement.' You cannot say to those people, 'We're now going to strip out funding for those services'—those services having already been performed. What that will ultimately lead to is a downgrading in services for the rest of the financial year.

In the case of Geelong last week, if you are ripping up to $5 million out of a six-month period, that has the effect of taking $10 million out of that budget over the course of 12 months. What is going to happen in a situation where up to 70 per cent of your hospital expenditure is wages? You are going to cut back on those wages. You are going to say to doctors and nurses, 'We don't want you to perform that surgery.' That is what is going to happen and that is the legacy of this government. That is why, when we talk about these health bills, it is so important that we talk about the impact on patients.

What is quite often lost in these debates when Labor talks about putting on new bureaucrats and building up the bureaucracy is that the patients are the ones that suffer. The Labor Party may be well intentioned in setting up new bureaucracies—they have created 12 of them over the last five years—but, in the end, what it does is deprive money from patients, from frontline services. As
Sarah Henderson rightly pointed out the other day, if the Geelong Hospital or elsewhere cuts back on elective surgery it is the patients, real people—people's mums and dads, grandparents and brothers and sisters—who are the ones that are going to miss out on valuable elective surgery.

To make it worse, this government hits those that have private health insurance. And, because we have universal health system in this country, if people drop their private health insurance they can turn up at a public hospital the next day. They have the same entitlement, regardless of income, to turn up at a public hospital and demand to be treated in an emergency department or to see a doctor or to be put on a waiting list. That puts enormous additional pressure on public hospitals.

I do not think anybody in this place would suggest that public hospitals right around the country are in a state where they can take thousands of more admissions each week without additional assistance. That is the crazy arrangement that this government has created over the course of the last five years. People say: 'What has Labor done? What achievements can Labor chalk up or be proud of in health?' They have cut now almost $4 billion, as I say, from private health insurance. They have cut out $1.6 billion over the forward estimates to hospital funding. This minister ripped a billion dollars out of the chronic disease dental scheme, and people who are waiting desperately for that service will be put to the back of the queue or join public waiting lists and that will make it harder for those people who are already on those public waiting lists.

That is the legacy of this Gillard government. The fact that they have presided over yet another health hiccup when it comes to the name of Medicare should not surprise anybody. This government did not think that Medicare was a brand that needed protecting. They did not think that they were unwittingly directing companies into breaking the law. But it seems, on the advice that I have, that that is exactly what this government did. Do you know why? Because they did not think through the policy. They wanted to have a good headline in a newspaper somewhere. That was it—start, finish. This government really have treated the health portfolio as they have treated every other portfolio, and that is with contempt and incompetence. This health minister treated the health portfolio as they have treated every other portfolio, and that is with contempt and incompetence.

This health minister can come into this chamber and explain to the Australian people why a billion dollars has been ripped out of the chronic disease dental scheme and why, when 80 per cent of people who used that scheme were concessional card holders, those people have been denied those services going forward. Why is it that this government have ripped $1.6 billion out of hospital funding when they say to the Australian public that they are going to put so much more money into public hospitals? Why do they do that? And why would they do it out of this year's budget, the money having already been budgeted for? In most cases, if not all cases, the money has at least partly been spent. Why would this government preside over such a debacle? Because they are not a government worthy of governing this country.

There will be amendments in relation to this bill, and there will be a lot more scrutiny applied to this government because people understand, day by day, that this government really has not achieved in the health portfolio anything like what it is they want the Australian people to believe they have achieved. We will be having more to say in the coming months and in the run-up to the next federal election about why we think this
government has failed in relation to health, why this government has failed pensioners and self-funded retirees around the country who are reliant on our health system. Why is it that this government has not delivered for those people in particular? Why, for children suffering with chronic diseases who require urgent dental work, has $1 billion been ripped out of that scheme that went to help those sick children before? These are the questions that people will be asking themselves in the run-up to the next election.

It is the position of the opposition to oppose bad policy where we see it and to try and praise the government where they have good policy. But, as I say, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish this portfolio from communications, which has been a disaster for the government; from education, which has been a disaster for the government; from economic management, which has been a disaster for the government. That is the position of the opposition.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (17:41): The Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 amends the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991 to correct referencing inconsistencies within the act, including those related to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. I would like to take the opportunity that this bill provides to speak about the issue of palm oil labelling, which is relevant to the issue of adequate food standards and labelling in Australia. Just as we have been tackling the root cause of illegal timber production through the historic reform of the Illegal Logging Prohibition Bill 2011, so too we have to tackle the root cause of unsustainable palm oil production. For this reason I strongly support the mandatory labelling of palm oil in Australia. The Don't Palm Us Off campaign by Zoos Victoria, which I have mentioned in the parliament before and which I support, aims to expose the link between consumers and orangutan survival in order to drive the production of certified sustainable palm oil through fair and mandatory labelling.

Just as we should be a responsible consumer of timber, we should also be a responsible consumer of palm oil. Palm oil is found in almost half the products on our supermarket shelves, yet it is not labelled. Labelling will help us create a consumer-driven market for certified sustainable palm oil—a form of palm oil that is produced in a more environmentally, socially and economically responsible way. Australian consumers want this, most of our major food manufacturers want this, and I believe it is the right thing to do for our community and for those communities in our neighbouring countries.

For over a year a fierce battle has raged over Indonesia's Tripa peat forest, an internationally protected region that is covered by a two-year moratorium on new forest concessions. It is being burnt and cleared at an alarming rate and it is being done so illegally in order to produce palm oil. The forest is home to people and wildlife and stores huge quantities of carbon. In 1990 almost 2,000 orangutans lived in the area. Today there are fewer than 200, as a result of illegal clearance and burning of their habitat for palm oil plantations. The smoke that has been generated by the illegal fires has devastated communities across the region and overwhelmed cities hundreds of kilometres away, causing people to seek medical treatment for smoke inhalation. So far more than 20 local communities have been impacted by the illegal clearing, including losing their land and livelihoods and suffering ill health.

In the report, Our land, our lives, Oxfam reveals a worrying rush to control the world's farmland and demands action to safeguard
the welfare of poor and vulnerable communities. The report gives the following example:

In 2007, indigenous people in West Kalimantan, Indonesia complained to the World Bank that a palm oil company it supported had cut down their forest and forced them from their land. The Bank's complaints ombudsman investigated and discovered serious systematic problems, as a result of which Bank standards had been contravened and Bank staff had been able to claim (incorrectly) that the project would have 'minimal, or no direct, adverse social or environmental impacts'. There was such a controversy that the then Bank President, Robert Zoellick, suspended the Bank's lending to the palm oil sector for 18 months until a new strategy was in place, supposedly intended to ensure that such problems did not happen again.

Oxfam have called on the World Bank to institute a temporary freeze on investments involving large-scale land acquisitions. They believe a freeze would create space to develop policy and institutional protections to ensure that no bank supported project resulted in land grabbing and would allow time for the wider impacts of land transfers on poverty and food security to be assessed. Australia imports more than 130,000 tonnes of palm oil each year, which makes us a participant in illegal forest clearing, such as that we have seen in the Tripa peat forest. It takes about 320 square kilometres of palm oil plantation to produce that 130,000 tonnes of palm oil, and this is a volume that continues to increase.

Deforestation releases large volumes of greenhouse gases. This is particularly severe in tropical forests growing on peat soils. In just one province of Indonesia, the Riau Province in Sumatra, the average annual greenhouse gas emissions between 1990 and 2007 were an estimated 0.21 gigatonnes of CO₂ arising from deforestation, forest degradation and the resulting peat fires. This deforestation destroys the habitat of iconic and endangered species like the orangutan, the Sumatran tiger, the Asian elephant and the Asian rhino. Of course, these species are just a small part of the entire threatened ecosystem.

It has been suggested that up to 300 football fields of forest are cleared every hour. The United Nations Environment Programme acknowledges that, in Malaysia and Indonesia, the main driver for this rainforest destruction is the development of palm oil plantations. The growing demand for palm oil is adding to the mounting pressures on the world's remaining rainforest areas. Forest loss and the draining of peat lands for palm oil plantations is contributing to climate change and displacing local people who rely on the forest for food and shelter. Palm oil is one of the world's most in-demand crops and land is being given over to it in Southeast Asia as well as in West Africa and South America.

There is an alternative to this, however, with certified sustainable palm oil, CSPO. This is palm oil that has been produced by plantations that have been well managed with good environmental, social and economic standards. For example, certified sustainable palm oil has to be sourced from plantations that were established on land cleared before 2005. So, by buying certified sustainable palm oil, major users of palm oil can avoid contributing to the ongoing destruction of forests in Southeast Asia.

In 2003 the WWF began to address the problem of deforestation to produce palm oil by setting up the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil with other non-government organisations and the palm oil industry. Since then they have worked with the industry to ensure that the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil standards contain robust social and environmental criteria, including a prohibition on the conversion of
valuable forests. Millions of people rely on this industry for their livelihood. By promoting sustainable palm oil certified by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil we provide the growth of a sustainable palm oil industry that sets new environmental and social standards. However, at present there is only a small market for sustainable certified palm oil, so it is actually more cost effective for manufacturers to use palm oil from sources that destroy virgin rainforest.

The WWF are working hard towards creating consumer demand for certified sustainable palm oil by: raising public awareness about the issue; exposing the link between unsustainable palm oil, deforestation and threats to important ecosystems and species; and supporting the mandatory labelling of palm oil. The WWF produced a scorecard in 2011 that measured the performance of 132 major retailers and consumer goods manufacturers against four areas to show whether or not these companies were acting responsibly. That scorecard revealed that there had been some progress on sustainable palm oil since the 2009 assessment, but their conclusion was that the new commitments were not translating fast enough into increased use of certified sustainable palm oil. They concluded that time is running out for palm oil buyers to take action and that companies need to seize the opportunity to support sustainable palm oil and help to avoid the irrecoverable loss of tropical forests and the unique species that inhabit them. This is a chance to show the world that they are part of the solution rather than a part of the problem.

Palm oil production is the single biggest threat to Southeast Asian rainforests and biodiversity and the species which depend on them. The Sumatran orangutan is classified as critically endangered while the orangutan from Borneo is considered endangered. Populations of both species are decreasing rapidly and, given the current rates of decline, it is likely that they could become extinct in the wild within as little as 10 years.

As I mentioned earlier, in terms of carbon storage, deforestation from palm oil production releases large amounts of carbon that is stored in the vegetation. Oil palm plantations are estimated to hold even less carbon than a logged forest, made worse by the fact that these plantations are only viable for 25 years. Furthermore, more and more plantations are being cultivated on vulnerable peat soils, one of the largest naturally-occurring carbon deposits worldwide.

I believe that, in addressing the problems associated with palm oil production, we need to look at the issue holistically which includes utilising the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil more effectively to ensure sustainable palm oil production becomes the norm rather than the exception. As a result we can reduce deforestation and at the same time we can enable people in developing nations to have a livelihood. Mandatory labelling has a role to play in the solution to heighten consumer awareness and thus drive demand for certified sustainable palm oil.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has released new information sheets on country of origin labelling and new information sheets regarding olive oil. These new guides for consumers provide information about the different types of olive oil products and how they differ as well as some storage tips. The guide is about providing consumers with information to help them make informed purchasing decisions, and I welcome this initiative. But there is no requirement at present to label palm oil or its derivatives in a product's ingredients list. I believe this
needs to change so that consumers can choose or demand the alternative to unsustainable palm oil.

The United Kingdom has recently announced that they will be certifying sustainable palm oil compliance by 2015. The British government, supermarkets, manufacturers, charities and the World Wide Fund for Nature have joined forces to work towards ensuring that by 2015 all palm oil used in everyday food and products, such as soaps, biscuits and cosmetics, is responsibly produced and does not contribute to deforestation. The British environment minister, Richard Benyon said:

People want to know that the products they are using are not contributing to deforestation and climate change and many UK businesses are already starting to make changes. Producers, manufacturers and charities will continue working together to speed up the move to 100 per cent sustainable palm oil in everyday products.

This announcement also has accompanied work through the international Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and the fact is that, at present, Australian consumers cannot tell whether they are contributing to deforestation and the accompanying threat to the survival of orangutans and other species, because palm oil is not clearly labelled on most food products. Changing food-labelling legislation in Australia to mandate the labelling of all food products containing palm oil would change this and create a market for certified sustainable palm oil by giving consumers their right to choose products that do not push endangered species to extinction. I commend this bill to the House.

**Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (17:53):** I rise to speak on the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. This bill makes a number of technical amendments to various acts of parliament. I will briefly cover the details of two amendments before moving on to the amendments to the Human Services (Medicare) Act, which I would like to discuss in more detail.

The first amendment I want to discuss is to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act. The bill makes minor technical amendments to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act to correct referencing inaccuracies, which were the result of previous amendments. The FSANZ Act was amended in 2010, however, certain section references to the amended provisions were not amended at that time. These amendments are consequential in nature and do not change the intent of the act, and the coalition does not oppose them. It is interesting to note, however, that this is a rewrite two years on; it has taken the government two years to identify this issue.

Then there is the ICNA amendment. The amendment to the Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Act makes a minor technical change to correct an inaccurate description of how chemicals are stored by Customs during transhipment. Goods are often stored outside the port or airport, but still in the complete control of Customs—for example, at a Customs bonded warehouse. As the legislation currently reads, the chemicals are required to be stored 'at the port or airport' while waiting for transhipment. The amendment will delete the references to 'at the port or airport' within the bill to more accurately reflect best practice. This will still require the chemical to be under the control of Customs at all times before being transhipped out of Australia.

I want to talk about the use of the word 'Medicare' and there is one amendment on this that I need to cover in detail, the proposed amendments to the Human Services (Medicare) Act 1973. Currently, under section 41C of this act, any person who uses the name 'Medicare' in connection
with a business, trade, profession or occupation is guilty of an offence. Subsection 41C(6) of the Human Services (Medicare) Act provides the exception that 'proceedings under this section shall not be instituted without the consent in writing of the Attorney-General'. This means that an organisation can be guilty of an offence by using the Medicare name, but will not be prosecuted unless the Attorney-General consents to doing so.

The bill before this parliament seeks to remove this subsection, and replace it with an exemption to the offence for any activity authorised by the secretary or prescribed delegate. This would allow the secretary to grant an exemption to allow any organisation to use the Medicare name with approval. What the government and the health minister have not been straight or upfront about here is why they are moving this amendment. We need to go back two to three years in time to the moveable feast that was national health reform and the recommendations of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. One of the recommendations that came out of that was we needed to have primary healthcare organisations to replace the divisions of general practice. At some point, someone—the member for Griffith or the member for Gellibrand—had a bright idea that instead of calling them primary healthcare organisations they should be called Medicare Locals. These primary healthcare organisations had nothing to do with Medicare, which is a comprehensive national health insurance scheme. But they replaced the divisions of general practice with 61 bodies called Medicare Locals.

We now have the extraordinary situation that one of the very people who came up with this name is now the person who as Attorney-General decides whether to prosecute someone for using the name 'Medicare'. The question I ask is this: would the government be moving this amendment unless the advice was that the use of the word 'Medicare' in the name 'Medicare Locals' was in fact a breach?

The opposition believes that there was no need to rename the divisions of general practice and that, if they did need renaming, the name did not need to include the word 'Medicare'. The current chair of the Australian Medicare Local Alliance, Dr Arn Sprogis has admitted that the Medicare Locals name was 'a shocker'. He is also on record as saying, 'We will live with the name even though it's got nothing to do with Medicare'. If you look at similar organisations in the United Kingdom or New Zealand, they are primary care trusts or primary care organisations. But this bright thought bubble came out of the then Prime Minister and the then health minister. There was no need to include Medicare in the name of the primary healthcare organisations. Those opposite are getting very good at fixing problems of their own creation. They created this mess and are now moving amendments to fix it.

As of July this year, all 61 Medicare Locals are operational, and all 61 may be breaching the Human Services (Medicare) Act by using the term 'Medicare' within their name as required by the government. We have the extraordinary situation of primary healthcare organisations doing what they have been asked when what they have been asked to do is in breach of legislation.

The amendment we are being asked to consider retrospectively legalises the government's mistake. It will also allow future governments to dilute the Medicare brand by allowing its use for other organisations if it so chooses. The simple and prudent fix would have been for the minister to admit the mistake and change the name of these organisations. No-one wants
the name 'Medicare Local'. Instead, they have tried to bring this legislation before the parliament to hide their errors.

The coalition believe that the name 'Medicare' should be protected, and not used for political or commercial advantage. Let me be clear. This debate is not about the merits of primary healthcare organisations. The coalition believe that there is a very important place for a coordinating role in primary care. This debate is purely about the use of the protected name 'Medicare'. It is a name, and a brand that should be protected. That is why the coalition will be moving amendments to this bill which omit the provisions relating to the use of the term 'Medicare'.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (18:00): I rise to support the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Prior to my main contribution to this debate I would like to pick up on a couple of things that the previous speaker said. To me it underlines the fact that he does not really understand what a Medicare Local is. He said in his contribution to this debate that he does not know why the Medicare Locals could not remain as the urban divisions of general practice. Now, the urban divisions did a wonderful job. I have had two very strong urban divisions within the area I live—the Hunter and the Central Coast. They did wonderful jobs, but a Medicare Local is not an urban division of general practice. A Medicare Local involves a number of health professionals. A Medicare Local works as a bridge between the primary care in the community and the public sector. So the first point I would like to make in this debate is that a Medicare Local is not an urban division of general practice. I am sure the previous speaker will take that on board.

This legislation has four major parts to it. It looks at the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991 to correct referencing inconsistencies within the act. These are fairly minor inconsistencies. They arose when the act was last amended in 2010. At the time, certain paragraphs were repealed and substituted with new subparagraphs. But the reference to the repealed paragraphs were not consequently adjusted to reflect the changes—removing references to changes under subparagraphs 146(6)(b)(i) and 146(6)(b)(ii) and replacing them with references in 146 and removing references to changes being picked up under 146. So those are quite minor amendments to items that needed to be corrected.

This legislation also recognises the ability for specialist trainees at any recognised medical college to perform certain procedures under direct supervision in the private setting, with the procedures being deemed to have been performed by the supervising specialist and with the supervising specialist retaining the right to any bulk billed Medicare fees. This is a very important change. It expands the training capacity and will now allow trainee specialists to perform procedures in the private sector. This widens the scope. Previously it was only surgeons who were able to act in such a way. These changes will allow other specialists such as in orthopaedics, ophthalmology, and obstetrics and gynaecology to work in the same way as the surgeons can. This is very fair and it needs to happen.

We have all heard how the state system has not been able to provide enough places, particularly in New South Wales where the O'Farrell government tends to want to cut public services and health. There have been enormous cutbacks in health by that government whilst the federal government is giving money to health and investing in the training of doctors. The state government is ripping money out of health.
Mr Dutton: You're ripping $1.6 billion out.

Ms HALL: I know it must really upset the shadow minister for health. I only have to refer to some of the research that has been done, including research that has been done by this parliament, when we put together the Beyond the blame game report. Many of the recommendations in that report were accepted by the government.

It is good to see that the shadow minister for health is in the chamber. He opposed the changes in relation to dental care that were a direct result of the report by the Standing Committee on Health and Ageing in 2006, which was a unanimous report. It was supported by all members of the committee including those from the other side of the chamber. To me it seems that we have such a negative opposition—an opposition that will object to anything at any time without putting in place sound reasons for their objections.

This is one of those pieces of legislation that will, yet again, focus the opposition on negativity—saying no and being obstructionist. There is only one opposition that I have ever known that has performed in this way. I know that when we were in opposition we tried to work things through and be positive so that we could deliver to the Australian people. Unlike us, the current opposition are just negative, negative, negative. And who suffers? The Australian people suffer. They do not get the health care that they need. To be so pedantic about the legislation that we have before us today beggars belief. I was really surprised to see the shadow minister speak as long as he did in relation to this because his contributions are usually fairly short and sharp. Obviously, when he can be negative about something, he gets in there for all he is worth.

The previous speaker was referring to the change in relation to human services. Currently under section 41C of the Human Services (Medicare) Act 1973 it is an offence for any person other than the Commonwealth to use the name 'Medicare' or 'Medicare Australia' in connection with business, including in any trading name or any activity, implying it is in any way connected to the Commonwealth. The opposition have decided that this is one little area that they can be negative about. They are objecting to the fact that we have Medicare Locals, which are connected to Medicare and provide a very important adjunct to Medicare. The Medicare locals really—

Mr Dutton: It's nothing to do with Medicare.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr KJ Thomson): Order! The shadow minister was heard in silence and will extend a similar courtesy to the member for Shorten.

Ms HALL: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I am used to the shadow minister for health. I know that he finds it very difficult to get all his comments into a debate and likes to call across the chamber very negative comments whenever he can. So I accept the fact that he is going to interject during my contribution to the debate. He has to make up for the lack of strength in his arguments by interjecting across the chamber.

As I was saying about Medicare Locals, Medicare Locals are very good, sound bodies. They are not urban divisions of general practice, as the previous speaker tried to indicate. They are a very important part of our health system and represent a reform that is bringing about change in the health system. Currently, though, the act is administered by the Department of Human Services, and any procedure under 41C—which refers to the use of 'Medicare', as I
referred to earlier—must be initiated by the department and requires the written consent of the Attorney-General at the time of publication. No prosecutions have been brought under his section, and the government wants to ensure that there are no such prosecutions.

The proposed amendments will authorise Medicare Locals and certain other bodies seeking to do so to use the term 'Medicare'—I emphasise 'authorise'. I think Medicare Locals are fine bodies to be granted that authorisation. When they are granted that authorisation they will not be breaching the act. The amendment also removes the requirement that the Attorney-General's consent must be obtained before offence proceedings can be brought under 41C. This will simplify the operation of the provision.

As I said previously, the members on the other side of this House always take the low road. They are always negative. They never look at being constructive and they never try and facilitate change. I believe that this is a very important change. It means that the Commonwealth will not be caught up in legal proceedings. It means that Medicare Locals can operate and do the job that they have been given to do, and that is to ensure that Australians have the best possible health services available to them. Medicare Locals are coordinating health services within local communities. They are not urban divisions of GPs. I emphasise again they are not divisions of GPs. They do not do the work of urban divisions of GPs. To categorise Medicare Locals as such shows a total lack of understanding of the role of Medicare Locals within our communities and within the health system.

There is another section of this legislation that I should briefly mention. That is the Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Act 1989. There is an amendment to that. Under the ICNA Act, certain industrial chemicals that represent a low risk are exempt from notification and assessment provisions, in keeping with the best practice principle that the regulator impost to industry should be in accordance with the risk posed. That is very sensible, very straightforward and something that this House should support. One such exemption relates to chemicals kept under the control of Customs during transhipment where those chemicals are exported within 13 days of import. The current act limits the transhipment provision to chemicals under the control of Customs at the point of introduction. Once again, this is streamlining and making the act much more effective. The bill therefore makes a technical amendment to the act to correct the inaccurate description of how new industrial chemicals are kept under the control of Customs.

This is important legislation. This legislation will lead to better provision of health services within our Australian community. The extension of the ability of medical colleges to provide specialty trainees with the opportunity to perform certain procedures under direct supervision in private settings is important. That opportunity should not be restricted to the College of Surgeons. It means that, obstetrics, gynaecology and other areas can enjoy the same situations enjoyed by the College of Surgeons. Once again, that will benefit the Australian people. That is what we are in this parliament for: to enact legislation that is going to benefit the Australian people.

The changes to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act are very minor. Once again, we will see that the act operates effectively and efficiently. The changes in relation to Medicare, which those on the other side seem to be so excited about, I believe are very, very important. Medicare
Locals are important bodies. They are not urban divisions of GPs. They support the Medicare service. Once again, changes to the industrial chemicals act of 1989 should be supported by this House. I encourage members on the other side of this parliament to think for themselves, to remember just how important Medicare is, to note the important services that Medicare Locals provide in our communities and to accept the fact that these changes are needed and that we are here to support our communities and not to play political games and be totally negative on every aspect that comes before the parliament.

Mr OAKESHOTT (Lyne) (18:15): My only reason for speaking on this legislation tonight is to raise the issue around the name 'Medicare Locals'. I strongly support the aims, the funding and the work of these new bodies—the new Medicare Locals—but it is my view that the name is a stinker. There should be no relation at all with the ongoing work of what is widely known as the Medicare brand.

I think—as do those who work in my Medicare Local, many members of the medical profession locally and many members of the general community on the mid-north and North Coast—that the role of these Medicare Locals is one of primary health, preventative health and the non-hospital-based services in health care in the community. They are not a payment house for Medicare as it is traditionally known. I have heard a fair bit of confusion from residents in my electorate who have not realised that Medicare Locals are intended for the purpose of primary health services. I think there is a real question about the Medicare brand and whether it should or should not extend to these services that are for preventative and primary health care within communities.

That is not to say that their aims and responsibilities are wrong. I disagree with the Liberal-National Party position in regard to removing Medicare Locals from communities such as the mid-north and North Coast of New South Wales. But I also disagree with the government's view in this legislation on expanding the number of people who can use the term 'Medicare', which I think will really add to the confusion at a community level.

I had proposed an amendment today. I am pleased that, through negotiation, we now look to have a process where the pros and cons of this name at a local level will be considered and there will be a review done of the Medicare Locals name. In that regard, I am comfortable not pursuing that amendment. There is a cost to changing the branding just as they have been established, but I hope that many people who have expressed their concerns to me about the Medicare Locals brand participate in this process of review—I include other members of parliament in that—and that we can then find a more appropriate name for what are valuable primary healthcare bodies in regions such as mine.

I strongly endorse the process and the point that that these Medicare Locals are trying to achieve, but I reiterate as a personal view based on feedback from many that I think that branding is confusing. I think it is a stinker. I am pleased that we now have a process where that can be reviewed. Hopefully a much better name can be put forward in the future.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (18:19): I speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The member for Shortland went through the changes to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991. She also mentioned the Industrial Chemicals (Notifications and
Assessment) Act of 1989 and the changes that have been made to that. I have no intention of also dealing here with the Health Insurance Act 1973 amendments which recognise the ability of specialist trainees of any recognised medical college to perform certain procedures under direct supervision in private settings.

I, like the previous speaker, the member for Lyne, want to deal with the issue of the name of the Medicare Locals. Medicare is a name and a brand which is accepted widely and respected widely by the Australian public. Indeed, a system of universal healthcare coverage is something that this side of politics is very proud of. We fought election after election in relation to it. It was former member of parliament Bill Hayden, when he was a minister in the Whitlam Labor government, who fought strenuously for Medicare's forerunner, Medibank, only to have the whole system corrupted under the previous Fraser Liberal government when they came to power. Medibank was nothing like what it was proposed to be under the Whitlam Labor government; it was supposed to make sure that all Australians could get access to decent and humane health care and that decent health care was not the province of the rich but available universally to all of us, young or old, rich or poor and whichever state or territory we lived in.

Medicare was brought in by the Hawke Labor government and has been accepted grudgingly and with difficulty by those opposite, but I am pleased to say that in recent years they have accepted that Medicare is something that the Australian public wants. I was pleased to see a brand so well respected and, indeed, loved by the Australian public used in this regard when we came up with the idea of the Medicare Locals. In fact, I have an electorate where there are two Medicare Locals. I will speak about those in a minute.

What this legislation does in terms of the Human Services (Medicare) Act 1973 is enable the Medicare Locals and other bodies seeking to use the term 'Medicare' to apply for authorisation to use the term without breaching the act and remove the requirement that the Attorney-General's consent be obtained before offence proceedings can be brought. This legislation permits that branding so widely respected in our community to be used by those Medicare Locals.

We had a troubled history in my community with the Ipswich and West Moreton Division of General Practice. Indeed, the Brisbane south division effectively had to be brought in to make sure that the Ipswich and West Moreton Division of General Practice could run in collaboration, that it was administered properly and that the primary healthcare services offered through that division were to the benefit of the people of the Ipswich and West Moreton region. I am pleased that the then CEO of the Brisbane South Division of General Practice, Vicki Poxon, subsequently became the CEO of the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local. I will mention her again shortly.

I have another Medicare Local covering my area, and that is the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local. I am pleased with the work they do. I note that they have been recognised for the work they do, particularly in offering a certificate IV course in partnership with Healthfirst Training Australia, a registered training organisation, providing nationally accredited qualifications in health training. They were recently awarded the 2012 education and training provider award in the category of the Health and Community Services Workforce Innovation Awards. They have been honoured in that way for what they do. I want to pay tribute to the CEO of the Metro
North Brisbane Medicare Local, Abbe Anderson, for the work that she does. Like Vicki, Abbe has had a lot of firsthand experience in the health field. She was a medical assistant in the United States and she has really championed the introduction of primary health care in Australia, particularly in the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local.

That Medicare Local covers the Kilcoy area. The rest of my electorate comes under the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local, which goes into south-west Brisbane, covering the Lockyer Valley and also the Scenic Rim areas. It covers the whole of the Somerset, the whole of Ipswich and areas around Oxley, Inala, Durack and the Centenary Suburbs around Brisbane. I am so pleased about the work that they are doing, and I can see that locally on the ground—for instance, the work that was done in the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local, particularly in the Kilcoy forum which they held on 4 October. They got together the leading citizens of the local area, not just politicians—the mayor of the Somerset region and a number of councillors were there—but lots of local doctors, nurses and community organisations, and took feedback from the local community.

The two Medicare Locals in my area are part of the network of 61 Medicare Locals across the country. The Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local was created on 1 July 2011. It was established by GPartners Ltd, a division of general practice located on the north side of Brisbane. It has two offices—one around North Lakes and one around Lutwyche—and it covers up to the rural part of Kilcoy.

What I was so pleased about was the forum that was held there. In a region that covers 871,000 residents, 272 general practices, six public hospitals and 95 residential aged care facilities, they took the opportunity to go to Kilcoy, which is right up in the far north of my electorate but also in the far north of the area. So they were clearly there to hear the views and to take the pulse of the people in that area, and that is in fact what they did. The forum was called Taking the Pulse. I have the report that they provided, and the feedback from the area really showed the challenges and the local knowledge and awareness. This is just another demonstration of what this federal government wants to hear: the local response, local ideas, local problems identified with local solutions being offered to the government and certainly to the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local.

Partnerships are clearly being made with organisations like Kilcoy Country Companions, a local organisation that provides assistance to so many people, and the Connecting Kilcoy Community group. So many other local organisations were there, including the Kilcoy RSL, which is where the forum was held. There were many other organisations there, including local pharmacists, local general practitioners and other interested parties. I look forward to the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local acting on those recommendations and the issues raised.

I want to also mention the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local and the work they are doing in my area and in a number of federal electorates, including those of the member for Wright, the member for Moreton and the member for Oxley. One of the things that I was pleased about was the need for further after-hours services in the Brisbane Valley, particularly around Fernvale. The Medicare Local partnered with Stellar Medical Centres and the principal GP, Dr Paul Crowley, to extend after-hours services at the centre in Fernvale from 6 pm to 10 pm weekdays and on Saturdays from 8 am to 12 noon. This will make sure that non-critical conditions,
illnesses and other problems, particularly for the burgeoning population in that area—the young families with children, people who are busy during regular work hours—and people who are concerned that their condition or illness may deteriorate over the weekend can also be covered. Non-critical conditions, of course, do not just afflict people from nine to five. Colds and flus, injuries and illnesses can affect people on weekends and after hours. That is an example of how they have done great work in partnership with a local general practice, Stellar Medical. I was pleased to open that after-hours service on 7 June this year.

I also note the work that West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local are doing with their regular email, the Practice Pulse. This terrific organisation offers a lot of information by way of email—about PPP programs, about programs to help local doctors, about e-health records and even about how practice receptionists are urgently required, and there is a whole list of other areas about which they have sought and provided information and run fora. I was pleased that they have partnered as well with headspace in Ipswich Central, which will be operated by Aftercare and will open in January 2013. West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local will be a significant partner of Aftercare in supporting the headspace program, which will help young people between 12 and 25 years of age in the whole of the Ipswich and West Moreton region. I have congratulated Aftercare. They have met with me on many occasions to indicate what sort of work they are going to do. They are pleased with the work they are conducting with the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local.

Some of the highlights for the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local include the after-hours service they are providing at Fernvale, in consultation with Stellar Medical; the Mind Health and Wellbeing Program in Ipswich that they are providing; their community advisory group, which I am pleased to say that many leading people in the West Moreton region and Ipswich are members of; their website, which, as I said, has been particularly helpful—they have a successful patient feedback website, including patient opinion, which I think is particularly innovative, and I have met with them to talk about that; and the opening of the youth program headspace, as I mentioned. Already we have seen about 400 people in our region receive free mental health services thanks to the Access to Allied Psychological Services, or ATAPS, program, which they assist, particularly through Artius, who run that program in consultation and associated with UQ Health Care, the GP superclinic at the University of Queensland Ipswich campus. But they have not forgotten the rural areas. I am particularly pleased with the great work they are doing in the rural areas. Recently, the Minister for Health joined the member for Oxley and I at the Springfield office of the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local for an interactive tour. I was pleased to see the emphasis not just on urban areas like Inala but also on rural places like Gatton and Fernvale. I am pleased with the work they are doing in that regard.

I want to make reference to the CEO, Vicki Poxon, and the work that she has done. Vicki has indicated that she will be relocating to Melbourne. She has been a terrific ambassador and has worked very hard to overcome the challenges faced by any start-up organisation. She has a new and expanding team and she has been acting like an Aussie Rules ruck rover in many ways, in the way she has conducted herself. I have always found her to be a very committed and community-minded individual with a huge passion for health services in the region. Under her guidance, the Medicare Local has
established a great foundation in the local area. They have been very active in the community, including attending the DisabiliTEA that I had in Brassall Shopping Centre and the recent forum we had with the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler, at the Cabanda Aged Care facility in Rosewood, where they were getting people to complete Taking the pulse forms. I was pleased to see Tanya McKenna, a teacher at Ipswich State High School, arranging for young people from Ipswich State High who were attending our DisabiliTEA to complete those Taking the pulse forms as well as the senior citizens and older Australians at Rosewood. Congratulations, Vicki. You have done a great job as the first CEO of West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local. I am sure that Dr Kay Pearse, the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local board chair, and the committee will find a suitable replacement, but you go with our love and respect. Thank you for the great work you have done in the whole region.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (18:34): I too rise to speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I thank the member for Blair for his contribution, because, even though we have the member for Oxley between us, we share the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local. I am sure that Dr Kay Pearse, the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local board chair, and the committee will find a suitable replacement, but you go with our love and respect. Thank you for the great work you have done in the whole region.

The bill before the chamber makes minor amendments to the readability of the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991 and does not alter the intent of the act or its regulations. Another amendment is to the Health Insurance Act 1973. This stems from a change to a regulation on 1 July 2011 which allows specialist trainees from an approved professional medical college to conduct certain procedures in private settings under the direct supervision—and I stress ‘direct supervision’—of a supervising specialist. This change has proved effective with stakeholders and is expected to increase training capacity for specialist trainees.

As every federal MP would know, specialist trainee positions are at an absolute premium at the moment. One of the problems associated with the decision by Health Minister Wooldridge, I think it was, about cutting off the production line for GPs is that, although Labor made steps to redress this short-sighted gatekeeping and bean counting, it will have health consequences, budget consequences and training consequences for many, many years to come, and we are just sorting that out. So this amendment is welcome, and, whilst it has been in effect for some time, this bill seeks to enshrine the policy in legislation rather than by regulation.
The main elements of this bill that I would like to speak on today are the amendments to the Human Services (Medicare) Act 1973 that aim to clarify that the term 'Medicare Locals' does not breach the act. At present, it is an offence for any person other than the Commonwealth to use the term 'Medicare' or 'Medicare Australia'. This legislative change is a common-sense approach to ensure that the use of the term 'Medicare Locals' is not in contravention of the act.

Like the member for Blair, I am fortunate to have two Medicare Locals in my electorate, the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local, which was described by the member for Blair, which is to the west of my electorate, and the Greater Metro South Brisbane Medicare Local, which covers probably 80 or 90 per cent of my electorate. The West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local is chaired by the very, very hardworking and indomitable Dr Kay Pearse, and the Greater Metro South Brisbane Medicare Local is chaired by Dr John Kastrissios. Obviously, these are only two of the 61 Medicare Locals spread out across Australia, but these two, which I know very well, do an excellent job in ensuring that they coordinate and deliver primary healthcare needs to our local community and connect patients with a range of healthcare services, meaning that there is better and more efficient access to health care. It is particularly in that job that they have in making the connections, bringing the stakeholders together, educating and reaching out to the public, particularly in primary health and preventative health, where we are starting to change those, making the wise investments that will pay off in the future as Australia ages and, sadly, as Australia becomes more and more unhealthy.

The West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local was founded on 1 October 2011, covering an area of almost 10,000 square kilometres from Ipswich to Boonah, from Laidley, Esk and Springfield through to Oxley, Corinda, Chelmer, Sherwood and Graceville—right up to the Indooroopilly bridge, in fact—which are the suburbs in my electorate. These patches, particularly to the west in that Ipswich corridor, are particularly booming, and there will be increased demand to meet the growing needs of this population.

The West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local provides a range of programs to assist the needs of our community. From an after-hours GP service to mental and Indigenous health, e-health—some great advances there—and also immunisation, it is doing some great things. This Medicare Local provides access to quality services when and where people need them. The CEO, Vicki Poxon, who is departing, will be a very, very sad loss. I knew her particularly when she headed up the southside division of GPs. I still drive past their former office every day on the way to work. She will be sadly missed, and I wish her well in her move to Melbourne.

The Greater Metro South Brisbane Medicare Local, or GMSBML—obviously that is not a three-letter acronym, so I might just call it Metro South—has a critical planning and integration role to identify any gaps in service delivery and ensure that all parts of the primary healthcare sector on the southside, which is a huge area, come together so that patients have the best possible care, provided through one central coordinating agency. Metro South was one of the first Medicare Locals to be established as part of the federal government's national health reform program. This Medicare Local covers over 3,700 square kilometres, including both urban and regional areas, and includes a diverse demographic of 890,000 patients from almost the Brisbane CBD right down to the Scenic Rim.
Regardless of what these organisations are called, they do a phenomenal job, and their role is only just kicking off. I love the fact that they have those patient-centred care outcomes and their particular focus in preventative health. The week before last I was with the Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, the member for Sydney, who came to my electorate for a breakfast, where we met with a lot of stakeholders, and then went on to some GP medical practices at Acacia Ridge and Sunnybank Hills, two completely different practices doing great engagement work and preventative health work.

I had three seniors forums in that same week. At one at Corinda State High School I was lucky enough to have the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local people come along to focus on some of the preventative health. It was amazing how desperate the seniors community was for information about so many preventative health matters. I think I am going to have to increase the number of seniors forums that I have, because we went over time and still did not have enough time for them to hear from all the speakers.

I was also lucky enough to have the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Minister Mark Butler, the member for Port Adelaide, visit a seniors forum held at St Brendan's, Moorooka. He also touched on a lot of those ageing issues in particular and also on some of that preventative health.

West Moreton-Oxley and Metro South are doing great work. I am sure that the member for Dickson, the shadow minister, is very supportive of the great work that they do. I look forward to continuing to work with the chairs, their committees and their people on the ground for years to come. I commend the legislation to the House.

Ms O'NEILL (Robertson) (18:43): I rise to speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. This is a bill for an act to amend the law relating to a few critical things—food regulatory measures, health, Medicare and industrial chemicals—and 'for related purposes'. That is a term that we hear in this parliament all of the time, a term not so commonly used out in the public but one that is vital for us to get on with the job of delivering real things that actually improve the lives of ordinary Australians as the core business of the work that we do in this place.

A lot of work that we do with legislation is like work done in other places; it is not always glamorous. This legislation would not be called a glamorous piece of legislation, and perhaps it might not attract a headline. It might not even attract a question in question time. Nonetheless, when it is enacted it will have a significant and positive impact on the way that entities involved in medical fields work with the government to deliver positive outcomes for Australians.

The first set of amendments in this bill relates to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991. The amendments correct referencing inconsistencies and make the act easier to read. They are minor and do not change the intent of the act or alter any of the regulations. The Australia-New Zealand food standards system is a cooperative arrangement between our two great nations. It is helpful for the constant flow of business and leads to improvements in communication, safety and productivity on both sides of the trench if we implement uniform food standards. Food standards are developed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand, FSANZ. Responsibility for enforcing food standards in Australia rests with the authorities in the states and territories and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, and in New Zealand with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority. The legislative change we are presenting today...
will help those very important and responsible agencies do their work better.

The second set of amendments relates to the Health Insurance Act 1973. On 1 July 2011, a change to the Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Regulations allowed specialist trainees from an approved professional medical college to conduct certain procedures in private settings under the direct supervision of a supervising specialist. This is important in terms of access to services. The procedures are deemed to be performed by the supervising specialist, who will retain the right to any bulk-billed Medicare benefit in relation to the procedures.

This has been a very popular change with stakeholders. It really enhances the training capacity for specialist trainees across the system. In terms of value for money, it ensures we can alleviate, at no extra cost, some of the training capacity issues for trainee specialists. This is a challenge being faced by health systems across the country. The government considers that it is appropriate that the policy should be recognised in legislation, which will happen once this piece of legislation passes through the parliament.

The third set of amendments relates to the Human Services (Medicare) Act. It is still an offence for any person, other than the Commonwealth, to use the term 'Medicare' or 'Medicare Australia' in connection with a business, including in any trading name or in any activity that implies it is connected to the Commonwealth. That presents an issue for Medicare Locals and other bodies seeking to use the term 'Medicare'. The proposed amendment will enable such bodies to apply for an authorisation to use the term without breaching the act. Thankfully, Medicare Locals are alive and well across the nation at the moment. They are a major reform to our health industry delivered by the Labor government. It is important that they are able to use the term 'Medicare' within the bounds of the law, and this legislation will enable that.

I would like to outline for those who might be listening to this debate—either here in the House or perhaps as they are driving the kids home from dancing classes somewhere in the back streets of the Central Coast—what Medicare Locals are. Medicare Locals are vital new organisations of our health professionals. Basically, all health professionals are starting to have conversations with each other, providing a model of care which wraps around the patient rather than the patient having to move from one agency to another. The time when you are at your most vulnerable and feeling the weakest is not the time that you want to find out how to negotiate a complex medical structure. Medicare Locals have the role of making it easier for patients to access services when they need them. There will be a formal linkage between the local GP, nurses and other health professionals, along with hospitals and aged-care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island health organisations, keeping up-to-date local service directories.

I am very pleased to say that when I was in my electorate on the Central Coast last week, I was able to briefly attend two events that were convened by Medicare Locals. The first one was an evening function held at the very beautiful Wamberal Surf Lifesaving Club, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It is a beautiful seat in which we live; nonetheless, people face health issues. Of course, after-hours access to a doctor is a critical issue for families who might have an illness they are concerned about. They do not necessarily want to have to take up the resources of a hospital. They do not want to be sitting in the emergency ward at Gosford or Wyong hospitals when they could be accessing after-
hours care and getting better and more sustained, regular treatment from somebody who gets to know them personally.

Approximately 40 of our local GPs gathered together on that evening for the dinner, at which there was a sustained and very fruitful conversation about how after-hours care can be delivered on the Central Coast. I know that there will be some adjustments from the current processes and, on the feedback that I have had from Medicare, we are certainly increasing and enabling a much more seamless connection for people with that vital after-hours service.

One of the reasons that Medicare Locals are quite different and that we are already seeing important conversations happen between all these related but often disconnected health professionals is that Medicare Locals work very closely with our local hospital networks. This is to make sure that primary health care services and hospitals work together for their patients. The term 'primary health care' has been a focus for this government. Let's talk about prevention; let's talk about early intervention; let's talk about support. They are the things that happen when we talk about primary health, as opposed to tertiary health, which is a response to a crisis. The more we can prevent ill health, the more we can help people to be healthy in the environment, the better the outcomes are for every Australian citizen and, indeed, for the bottom line of our health budget.

Apart from supporting after-hours face-to-face care, helping GPs manage that and get better models in place, Medicare Locals will also be the agency that is tasked with finding out where the services are missing. They are going to audit gaps where there are disconnects, and I do not think that they will find it too hard to get engagement from the local communities. They say: 'I went to my GP, but I couldn't get to a podiatrist. I went to a podiatrist, but I couldn't get the help that I needed for the other conditions that are related to my diabetes.' The role of Medicare Locals is to coordinate and address those service gaps. They will also support the connection between many allied health professionals, who have been sitting off in their own little satellites, disconnected from the general health network.

About two months ago I was able to attend one of those Medicare Local events, where allied health professionals who had had no engagement with GPs were meeting with the Medicare Local for the first time and through that event they were meeting one another for the first time—physios meeting physios, physios meeting chiropractors, chiropractors and physios speaking about what they could do collaboratively. All of them were noting that networks for connection until that time were quite difficult to come by. They came to see how much they could enhance each other's work.

These Medicare Locals will be able to use the term 'Medicare' much more comfortably after this piece of legislation passes, but I am sure that they will continue to be very mindful of their need to be accountable to their local communities—and that is the other term. Yes, it is about Medicare; yes, it is about access to the health care that Australians have come to expect since the Labor government brought it in, restored it and has made sure that it continues to work. But it is also about making sure that things happen for people locally in their local area.

The Medicare Local on the Central Coast was in the third tranche of Medicare Locals that were released. It basically opened for business from last July. They really have got off to a flying start, and I am really very proud of the local people who have been leading it. I want to put on the record this
evening the work in particular of Richard Nankervis, who is the CEO leading this very significant improvement to health access for our locals and improved communication between local health professionals. I would also like to acknowledge Graham McGuinness, who has had a long and distinguished career in the health sector. He is bringing his great wisdom and experience to bear on assessing where the gaps are in service provision on the Central Coast and developing and delivering real, practical, enabling and very good-value-for-dollar responses to that reality. I would also like to acknowledge the many, many years of service given to the forerunner of our Medicare Locals, which was our Division of General Practice on the Central Coast, and in particular the work of Dr Phil Godden. When I first assumed the role of member for Robertson, it was of great assistance to me in familiarising myself with local issues to have a conversation with a physician, who not only has great experience in running the business side of his practice but also has a great heart for people. He is a physician in the largest sense of the word—a great carer of the human person; he has looked after so many people across the coast.

That former Central Coast Division of General Practice set a really good standard for what our Medicare Locals might achieve. They worked to improve the quality and safety of health services through our Primary Care Collaboratives program, which is proving to underpin a great model for how we might advance with Medicare Locals. They implemented the palliative care gold standard project, aimed at strengthening the capacities of GPs to deal with that very important issue of end of life and manage that in such a way that people get the care they need. They did much more work than that, particularly with our frail older people in the Coast Nutrition Home and Community Care program. They even included people from special needs groups and younger people with a disability and their carers in their consultations. That is the style of our Medicare Locals and the way it will work.

Finally, this legislation will make some amendments to the Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Act 1989 and that will bring the regulatory impost for companies into line with the risks that those chemicals pose. While this legislation, as I said, is not particularly glamorous, I can speak to the House about the visit of the very energetic and determined Minister for Health to the Central Coast to inspect the $57 million investment in health infrastructure that is happening in the seat of Robertson. I hope that I will able to bring her back very shortly to see our superclinic, our regional cancer centre and our Woy Woy rehab centre opened.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:59): From the outset I can say that my view is that this legislation makes some common-sense changes to a number of existing acts—those acts being the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991, the Health Insurance Act 1973, the Human Services (Medicare) Act of 1973 as well and the Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Act 1989.

The Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991 was last amended in 2010, and other speakers have referred to this having been the case. The changes in this legislation corrected some typographical errors and deleted some obsolete references. From time to time it is appropriate to go through acts and delete what is no longer relevant or pick up on any typographical errors that have been encountered in the course of the administration of the act in question.

The Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991, as its name implies,
essentially sets out the standards under which food is to be sold and marketed here in Australia. The act is administered by a combination of all the states and territories as well as by the federal government of Australia and the New Zealand government. Whilst there are clearly some benefits in having all these parties working together on food standards for Australia, the reality is that, when changes are needed to the act, it quite often takes an incredible amount of time to make them. When this government came to office in 2007, one of the first things it did was carry out an inquiry into food labelling in this country. Food labelling laws, which govern the labels placed on food, were regularly being raised with members on all sides of the House, so the Hon. Neal Blewett, a former member of this place, was engaged to carry out an inquiry on food labelling laws. After he had carried out the inquiry, he reported back to the House. Highlighted in the inquiry was the fact that there was room to make a number of improvements to food labelling across Australia. It was also highlighted how long it takes to put any recommendations into effect because of the fact that any change requires the agreement of so many different parties.

It seems to me that, at a time when we often see changes in society occur very quickly, we need to have in place processes which enable the government to respond very quickly to such changes. I ask whether the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act of 1991 continues to serve us as well today as it did back in 1991 and whether it is a time to have a complete review of the act. The states have finally transferred responsibility for water in this country to the Commonwealth, and that is a good thing. Perhaps this ought to be the case with food labelling also, because I can assure the House that food labelling continues to be raised with me by people in my electorate. They are particularly concerned about country-of-origin labelling.

I will quickly go through some other acts which are being changed, and I want to talk at greatest length about the changes to the act governing Medicare Locals. However, I will discuss first the proposed changes to the Health Insurance Act 1973, which would allow trainee medical specialists to carry out certain procedures in a private setting under the direct supervision of a specialist. Under this change to the existing act, the specialist would not only directly supervise the trainee but also be able to bill for the procedure. I believe that this would be an appropriate change to make. It has been raised with me in the past that there is a problem because the specialists involved in the training of medical graduates simply cannot set aside the time to do the training, which is done at a cost. If the supervising doctor—in this case, the specialist—were able to supervise the training and still bill for the time, I have no doubt that more specialists would be encouraged to train the trainees or that, in turn, we would end up with a much better medical workforce. Such a common-sense change would result in improved medical outcomes for the community once it were implemented.

The proposed changes to the Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Act 1989 are also of an administrative nature. They would simply allow new industrial chemicals which represented a low risk to be exempt from notification and assessment provisions in the Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Act. One of the proposed exemptions would allow the exemption, from the provisions, of chemicals which are to be exported within 30 days of import and which are kept under the control of Customs during trans-shipment. Trans-shipment has become a common practice throughout the world—it is not
unusual for chemicals to be brought into this country and then transferred to another country. In such cases, it makes sense that the chemicals which are to be transferred not necessarily be subjected to the same kinds of assessments and procedures to which are subjected chemicals to be used in Australia. Such a change to the existing legislation would be the result of merely applying common sense to an existing practice. I note that this change has the support of industry. This is not surprising because, when you create more bureaucracy for industry to negotiate, it is costly. Allowing this common-sense change will save industry money.

The question of Medicare Locals has been raised by other speakers—in some cases, with some criticism. The fact of the matter is that, when this government came to office, it embarked on a process of reforming the national health system. Amongst those reforms were included the establishment of Medicare Locals to replace what was previously known as Divisions of General Practice. The outcome has been that we now have 61 Medicare Locals across Australia, when previously there were 109 Divisions of General Practice. In other words, there were far more of what I would call ‘bureaucratic organisations’ in place than we now have. What I believe has been established is a much more efficient way of providing health services across Australia.

It is fair to say that Medicare Locals have been in place only for a relatively short time. Time will tell whether they are working as effectively as the government had predicted or whether they are not. But it is certainly too early to criticise them, as some have done.

At the time the Medicare Locals were introduced into my electorate in South Australia, there was some resistance to the notion of a Medicare Local being set up, because it meant the disbandment of Divisions of General Practice. Again, I can well recall some of the arguments being put at the time, and I accept some of the criticism, which I believe was made in good faith. However, the Medicare Local has now been in operation for some time and since its establishment I have not had brought to my attention any specific areas of concern in respect to the work and responsibilities of the Medicare Locals. So I can only assume by that it is working well. It certainly covers a much larger region that the original Division of General Practice, but, again, I do not see that necessarily as being a bad thing because it enables the Medicare Local to coordinate services across a larger region. That in turn fits in better with the state government’s provision of services in South Australia, where it too has established what I would call a regional basis for the provision of health services in the area.

What we do know is that the Medicare Locals will be responsible for ensuring that primary healthcare services are tailored to best meet the needs of each local community. And if we can do that, the patients will clearly benefit. We know that if we can link patients not only to their GPs but also to the range of allied health services they may require after having seen their GP, that will also make life for people in the community much easier. If you have a medical problem, the last thing you want to do is be confronted with one problem after another, because as you get referred from one service to another you either do not know where to go or it is a service that is not easy for you to access. By having Medicare Locals, my view is that we will be able to better provide the whole range of services that someone might be in need of after having seen their GP, all within close proximity or easy to access proximity for the
person. That in itself must be a huge relief for a person who has a medical problem to begin with.

I also note that since July of this year Medicare Locals have been provided with the flexibility to spend funds allocated to them in a way that they believe best suits the needs of their local community. Again, that is not only a good thing, but it is a smart thing, because nobody knows better than the professionals in a local region what the priorities should be and where money should be spent. With respect to that I believe that the Medicare Locals also will serve the very important service of identifying where there are health gaps within the system, what those gaps are and how they can best be fulfilled.

The issue of Medicare Locals works in and links in very closely with one of the initiatives in my electorate of Makin, and that is the establishment of a GP Plus Super Clinic. This was a Super Clinic commitment that was made by the government back in 2007. In conjunction with the state government, who also made a similar commitment to the local region, $25 million was set aside for the establishment of the Modbury GP Plus Super Clinic. Health Minister Tanya Plibersek officially opened the GP Plus Super Clinic only a couple of weeks ago, on 8 November. We went through the facility on the day and I can say that it lives up to every expectation that we had of what the GP Plus Super Clinics would provide by way of health services, once it was completed. In fact, it is one of two facilities that come under the umbrella of the GP Plus Super Clinic, the other being at a place a few kilometres away, where it provides what we call an outreach service.

But, in essence, this is a facility that provides not only general practice but also nursing services, dentistry, medical specialist services and allied health services, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dietetic, diabetes nurse education and mental health services. The new clinic will also have a strong emphasis on education and training of health professionals and will have a focus on clinical services, including chronic disease management, health promotion and early intervention services. Importantly, the clinic will complement services provided at the Modbury hospital, located almost adjacent to the new clinic. That was one of the primary reasons it was committed to back in 2007. Because we knew that the Modbury hospital was having to provide services, particularly in the outpatients department of the hospital, that could have otherwise been provided at a local GP service, had one been available. The number of people who were going to the outpatients of Modbury hospital at the time was causing an over-demand for services in outpatients, and that in turn was making people wait longer than they should have, particularly those people who were there for legitimate hospital services.

As I said from the outset, this legislation simply makes a number of common-sense changes to some of the existing health acts. I commend the legislation to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012

Report from Federation Chamber

Bill returned from Federation Chamber for further consideration; certified copy of bill presented.

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the question:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (19:14): Since starting my contribution in the Federation Chamber, I am glad to say that I have updated myself on what the government's
current position is. In the time it took me to get from the Federation Chamber to the House of Representatives, there has been substantive change to this woeful legislation. I am sorry to say that that change is not necessarily for the better. An announcement from the government has come out saying:

Following consultations, the Government will amend the Bill to provide authorised deposit-taking institutions, First Home Savers Account providers, life insurers and superannuation funds more time for implementation. They will now have until 31 May 2013 to report on and transfer lost accounts and other lost moneys to Australian Securities and Investments Commission or the ATO as appropriate.

That change, which has been brought in during the time it has taken for me to get here from the Federation Chamber, is a change in the deadline—for the entire finance and banking industry—of one month. It is one more month than in the original legislation.

One of two things is going on here. Either the government is so cheap that it thinks that one month is going to be enough to make a substantive difference to the problem we have been highlighting in this legislation, or this is a typo and it should say ‘one year’. The opposition's amendments called for a minimum of an extra year to give the banks and other organisations in the sector a reasonable chance to get a handle on it. One month simply does not cut it. Assuming this is not a typo or an error—and that is a big assumption with this government—what is going on? Why are they rushing through changes just to move this deadline by one month? In fact, this is even more revealing of the government's real agenda—that is, that they are still trying to grab, simply for inactivity, the money of ordinary Australians.

The press release goes on to say:

To improve certainty for industry, the Government will also clarify a number of technical issues through regulation—

I will leave aside, for a moment, the misnomer 'improve certainty for industry—

To avoid capturing accounts unintentionally, the Government will introduce regulations so that children's accounts will still need to be inactive for seven years before being treated as lost.

That is incredibly generous. They have finally realised they were taking money off the kids—so now they are going to give the money back to the kids. I am not sure that amounts to a whole lot of money, but they have finally realised they were taking money off children. No wonder the members for Lyne, New England and Melbourne are getting very nervous about the provisions of this bill. They are right to be nervous. They are right to listen to the opposition's concerns. It is not only these children's accounts which were at risk of being raided by this money hungry government but also there are other types of accounts which should not be caught by this legislation.

The government's press release also says:

In addition, regulations will specify that First Home Saver Accounts will be excluded until the requirement to make a deposit in four years has been met. Hallelujah! Without knowing it, I was being prophetic when I spoke in the Federation Chamber about the problems with first home saver accounts. But this is supposed to improve certainty in the industry. This is supposed to provide confidence to the economy and the sector that the government knows what it is doing.

They are rushing to get their hands on any available cash out there in the financial sector, even legitimate accounts. They are rushing around making last minute changes on the pretext of improving certainty. It does
not stack up. The reason it does not stack up is that we have not seen an update from the government, in the explanatory memorandum or anywhere else, about how this will affect the bottom line. That is what we really need to know. How will this change the financial impact of the bill over the forward estimates? That is the question of the day, the question we ought to be discussing here right now. Again, there is no government member in this chamber to stand up and say: 'Here is the glorious vision of the Gillard government. We are going after unclaimed super for consolidated revenue. But we have protected the kids. We will not take those Commonwealth Bank piggy banks away from them. We are going to give them back.' How generous of the government.

It is revealing that there is no update to the forward estimates. What is the government's real intention with these changes? These changes are designed to trick the members for Lyne, New England and Melbourne into thinking that this government has done something. They are trying to look as if they have responded to the issues we have been highlighting. Moving the deadline one month is purely a symbolic change. Giving the children their inactive accounts back—that is not all that generous. That is not really a big change. Does anyone think that there are hundreds of millions of dollars in children's accounts?

We come back to the point that we all know what is going on with this bill. We all know what is going on with the government's changes. They are trying to look as if they are doing something for the Independents and crossbenches in order to secure their support. I say to the members for Lyne, New England and Melbourne: 'Please do not be fooled by these superficial changes. This bill is still bad legislation.' It is bad because it makes unreasonable, rash and unnecessary changes to so many Commonwealth acts in order to claim moneys of ordinary citizens that ought not to be claimed by government in this way. The rush has produced so many detail problems that it is impossible for me to outline them all in the time remaining.

The press release put out late this afternoon by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer is silent on critical issues, including the identification of, and the deeming deadline for, unclaimed accounts and money. That deadline is currently 31 December 2012. It appears this has not been changed. This is very problematic for banks and superannuation account providers. That is the point we have been making from the beginning. The government is simply trying to look as if it has done something—in order to secure the political support of the crossbenches—without actually doing anything substantive to improve the quality of this bill to avoid serious consequences for the sector and to govern this country effectively.

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield) (19:22): I am pleased to speak on the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012. This government's desperate grab for cash is a dismaying and unedifying spectacle. Having lost control of its finances, it is casting around furiously looking for any possible opportunity to scrabble together what in the context of the Commonwealth government budget is a relatively small amount of money but in the context of individual Australians whose money is now to be gathered up and captured by government without them realising is a large amount of money. It is truly a dismaying and unedifying spectacle. It brings to mind the example of parents who have so lost control of the family finances that they are reduced to smashing open their child's piggy bank to pull out the coins saved so carefully.
In substance, what we have in the bill before the House is the elected government of this nation going into the bank accounts, the superannuation accounts, the life insurance policies and other places where citizens of this nation have sought to accumulate savings and using a technical and an artificial and a strained definition of unclaimed moneys to gather up moneys as quickly as possibly and apply them to consolidated revenue. We are told that this is in the interests of citizens; we are told that the only motivation for this high-minded government introducing these measures is to protect citizens against the ravages of high fees and other impacts on their accumulated savings. We on this side of the House are deeply sceptical. We are unpersuaded, despite the government's assertions, that its motives have anything to do with protecting citizens against high fees. In our view, the government's motivations are transparently clear—this is a desperate grab for revenue by a government which has produced deficit after deficit and is now looking for any way possible to achieve its promised surplus.

As a number of speakers have advised the House this evening, there are provisions in this bill which vary the unclaimed moneys regime applying to different kinds of accounts and assets. There are five essential sets of measures. One deals with bank accounts and reduces from seven years to three the minimum period after which moneys can be treated as unclaimed. Another deals with first home saver accounts, although we are told in the press release from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer this afternoon that there will be some relaxation of those provisions. Another deals with life insurance, another deals with superannuation accounts and the last deals with unclaimed moneys in the case of corporations.

In the brief time I have available I want to make three points. The first is that what we are seeing here is a truly terrible public policy process driven by this government's desperate scrabbling around for cash; its desperate scrabbling around to find additional sources of revenue. The second point is that serious technical and policy problems run through many of the changes to the five different regimes I have spoken about. In view of the seriousness of those technical and policy problems time ought to be taken to carefully address those issues with a view to resolving them. If the government were proceeding in good faith, it would take extra time to ensure those matters were resolved. The coalition has amendments to give effect to what we see as the sensible way forward, and that is the third point: what needs to be done to fix up this mess?

Let me turn to the truly terrible public policy process we are seeing here. We are told these measures will raise $760 million between the end of December 2012 and 30 June 2013. That is a very important period if you happen to be a government desperate to achieve a surplus in the 2012-13 financial year. As it happens, that is precisely what we have—we have a government which is desperate to achieve such a surplus and is therefore rushing this bill through in a disorderly and chaotic process. If reforms are to be made in this area—and the coalition is not close-minded to the merits of change—the paramount interest which should be considered is the interest of Australians whose money is held in savings accounts, whose money is held in superannuation accounts, whose money is held in life insurance policies, whose money is held in accounts and assets of the various kinds this bill deals with by way of material changes to the unclaimed money laws.
It is patently clear that the interests of account holders come a very long way down the list of the considerations which this government regards as important in rushing this bill through, and they fall a long way behind the government's desperate desire to raise revenue so as to achieve the surplus which it has promised for 2012-13—a surplus which is completely at odds with the proven character and behaviour of this government, which has delivered the four largest deficits in the history of Australian public finance, racking up accumulated deficits of $172 billion. But, because of this government's haste and its politically motivated desire to grab revenue wherever it can, fundamentally important policy considerations going to the basic rights of Australians who set aside money for the future are being disregarded. That is a dismaying thing to see in a government.

I turn to some of the technical problems which the various measures in this bill present. I will speak, firstly, about the changes to the inactivity test in section 69 of the Banking Act. The deadline proposed for the implementation of these changes is 31 December this year. As a consequence of the press release from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer this afternoon, we know that the date on which the banks need to hand over the cash has moved from the end of April 2013 to the end of May 2013, but it does not in any material way change the fundamental unreasonableness of the timing being imposed on the banks. Here is what the Australian Bankers’ Association had to say in its submission to the Senate Economics Committee:

… the proposed timing for implementation and a commencement of 31 December 2012 is unrealistic, being in less than 2 months and falling during a period when banks implement freezes on any technology or IT systems changes.

More fundamental than the technical problems of implementation is the policy question of whether it is reasonable to treat as 'unclaimed' money sitting in an account which has not been touched for a period of three years. There are a whole host of very good reasons why a citizen might choose to put money into an account and not touch it for three years—not make a deposit into the account or a withdrawal from the account. It may well be that this citizen is spending some time overseas, and a job posting of three years is by no means unusual. It may well be that a grandparent has set aside some money for a grandchild. As I said, there are a whole host of reasons why citizens might choose to put money aside and leave it in a bank account, untouched, for three years. It is just the most extraordinary proposition that three years of inactivity is enough for the government to be able to say, ‘Oh, well, that money must be unclaimed. We'll get our hands on that, thanks very much.'

One of the other material concerns is what might happen to citizens who put money into an account which was paying interest. By the operation of this legislation, they would find the money removed from that account and handed over to consolidated revenue. The government assures us that citizens need not be concerned, because if they can prove they have a claim to that money they will get it back—but at what interest rate? That is the critical point, and here I quote from the submission made by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia to the Senate committee:

A high level analysis by CBA indicates that the majority of account balances at CBA which would be impacted by the proposed changes to unclaimed monies currently receive an interest rate higher than the CPI linked rate which the Bill proposes to be paid on those balances once transferred to unclaimed monies.

So citizens who, for perfectly good reasons, chose to put money into a bank account and
conducted no transactions on that bank account for a mere three years, and who may have done so on the assumption that they were being paid a certain rate of interest by the bank, will find themselves in the situation—should this bill pass into law—where the money can be removed from that account and handed over to the Commonwealth; and if, as they quite reasonably should, they put up their hand and say, 'Hang on; that's actually my money and I want it back,' they will get it back but at a lower interest rate than the one the bank was paying them. That seems to be an extraordinary intervention on the part of the state in the affairs of citizens.

Turning to superannuation, the technical and policy consequences of the changes that are proposed in this ill-considered and badly-thought-through piece of legislation are troubling in the extreme. One consequence is that the threshold for a superannuation account to trigger the unclaimed moneys provision will rise from today's level of $200 to a level of $2,000. This means that the funds in a much wider range of accounts could be treated as unclaimed. There is also the very real likelihood that accounts which are in substance active will be artificially treated by this legislation as inactive, and the moneys will be removed from the superannuation account in which they sit and paid into consolidated revenue.

This is particularly going to hit, I might add, those with lower balances—those with balances under $2,000. It will disproportionately hit the young, who are relatively early in their careers and relatively early in the accumulation of superannuation balances, and it will disproportionately hit the low paid. It is an indication of this government's desperation to gather revenue to achieve its politically motivated budgetary position that it would do so at the expense of young workers and low-paid workers. It is noteworthy that the Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees and the Financial Services Council—two organisations that are not always aligned when it comes to superannuation policy matters—have jointly recommended that the regulations set a minimum two-year membership period before an account is treated as lost.

One of the other concerns when it comes to superannuation is the inconsistency between the measures contained in the bill before the House this evening and the measures imposed under the SuperStream set of reforms, which funds are required to comply with, and have arrangements in place to do so, from 1 January 2014. Now there is this new set of changes which is required to be complied with earlier. The Association of Superannuation Funds told a parliamentary committee that this overlap was likely to lead to moneys being transferred from superannuation account providers to the Australian Taxation Office and then, very likely, transferred back again. It is an absolutely crazy outcome and an indicator of the chaotic process through which this legislation has been developed.

The third point I briefly want to make is that there needs to be a fundamental review of these provisions. The coalition has moved amendments to give that result, and if our amendments are not accepted we will be opposing this legislation.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (19:37): It is not a surprise to me as I rise to speak on the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012 that there is nobody on the opposite side of the chamber who is actually willing to speak in favour of this bill. Why would they? Why would they speak on a bill that is designed to take money away from Australian citizens through their bank accounts, their First Home Saver Accounts,
their life insurance policies, their superannuation and, ultimately, various corporations and companies. It does not surprise me that there is nobody who is prepared to put their name to this, because this is the most blatant cash grab that we have seen even from this government in its short period in office.

Minister Shorten I think is trying to make himself even more infamous than the bushranger Ned Kelly, who was known for his snatch and grab. Minister Shorten's record, if this bill passes, will definitely rival his. One can only question whether he has been somewhat inspired by the culture—and we have heard a little in this chamber today and in previous weeks on various unions that have created this culture—in some unions where elected officials feel that it is perfectly fine to use the money of their members for their own personal benefit. It is a culture that has come under serious scrutiny in the AWU, and it is a culture that we have heard an awful lot about in the HSU where, again, members' money has been used not for their benefit but for the benefit of others.

So what is the benefit here? The benefit if this bill passes will be, indeed, to the government, because they will get an extra $760 million in additional revenue from this bill—money they so desperately need to try and disguise their financial incompetence during the short period of time that they have been in office, which has seen our fiscal position radically altered from a position where previously a coalition government regularly delivered budget surpluses—during the last budget, a $20 billion surplus—where there was no net debt and where the government's $96 billion of debt had been paid off. We have seen this position reversed, with this government's incompetence, waste and mismanagement. We have seen four budget deficits delivered, to an accumulated amount of $172 billion, and net debt of over $147.3 billion. Yet this government is trying to maintain the fiction that, come the next budget, they will have a surplus of $1.1 billion. How is it that they say they are going to achieve this? Well, one needs only to look at this bill to try and work it out. When you look at only one portion of this bill, the superannuation measures, of this bill, you will see that, of that fictional surplus of just over $1 billion that the government maintain they will have, around $555 million would come from that one measure.

It is important that in the time remaining I turn my attention to what the government is specifically proposing to do, because it would shock most Australians to hear this. Let me first turn to schedule 1. The government will amend section 69 of the Banking Act to make new arrangements for unclaimed moneys, to reduce the period for which people can have inactive bank accounts from seven years to three years before the government wants to come in and take the money and put it into consolidated revenue. There is no limit on the amount of this money; it is not capped. It could be $20; it could be $200,000; it could be $2 million. If it has been inactive for a period of three years, under this bill the government is proposing that that money should go to consolidated revenue if it is unclaimed. The test is whether or not money has gone into or gone out of that account. That is it.

Yet we know that there would be very many reasons for which people may have accounts that sit inactive for a period of time. I can think of occasions—for instance, on the birth of grandchildren, grandparents may decide to set aside some money as a bit of a start-up for a child's first bank account. They may put some money into that account and then that money may not move for many, many years—certainly well above three years. Under the government's proposal, this
money could potentially be transferred into consolidated revenue. I can think of other occasions: for example, somebody who is elderly decides that they need additional care and that they want to go into an aged care facility; they decide to sell up the family home and then put that money into an account, where it will be safe, in a bank; they do not want to touch that money for a period of time, and it sits there for one, two, three, four, five or more years.

Under the government's proposal, this money, again, is money that could be transferred through to consolidated revenue. There are multiple examples of people travelling overseas or people with mortgage offset accounts. Despite the fact that the government has rushed out a press release claiming that offset accounts will not be included in this legislation and that they will make good on this promise through regulation, there is nothing in the legislation that could give us any comfort around this fact.

So it concerns us greatly. It concerns us greatly that there will be people out there in the community doing entirely the right thing—saving, preparing for their future and preparing for their children's future—and yet with this change all of that could be eroded because the government, as I said, could claim the money in a great smash and grab in order to try to maintain this fiction of a budget surplus going into next year.

But it does not end there because there are other ways that the government would like to take your money. There is the first home saver account, which is part of schedule 2 of this bill. Schedule 2 amends the First Home Saver Accounts Act to provide for new arrangements for unclaimed money held by FHSA providers. It amends this so that again the period is shortened. It is truncated from seven years to three years. While it says in the legislation that if money is in fact taken from people and put into consolidated revenue and it is then found that people come back years into the future to claim that money back they will provide some level of interest for the money that was taken, there is absolutely no certainty around that. In fact, the committee that looked deeply into this issue heard a number of submissions that said there were grave concerns that the appropriate interest rate would not be paid. Again, this was part of the motivation of the government so as to ensure they had more money for consolidated revenue.

The third schedule that the government has in this bill is about life insurance. It amends section 216 of the Life Insurance Act to provide, again, for new arrangements for unclaimed life insurance moneys. Again, it is using this arbitrary time period of three years to be able to sweep in more quickly to take this money.

The fourth schedule is around superannuation. At least with the changes the government are proposing to superannuation here they say they are going to put a cap on the amount of money that they are looking to take from people's superannuation accounts at $2,000. This attack on superannuation is the latest in a long line of attacks, despite the fact that we have heard previously from the minister what a great friend he is to the superannuation system. In fact, it was not all that long ago that Minister Shorten said on the ABC's Q&A program that the government are the strongest defenders of the Australian superannuation system. He said: 'We are the ones who constantly build and keep building it.' When you look at the facts, that is, frankly, a complete joke.

Let me remind the House that these latest cash grabs in this bill targeting superannuation come on top of the $7.8 billion in increased taxes and charges on
superannuation that we have seen in Labor's previous budgets. The Labor government has already increased taxes on voluntary savings by reducing concessional contribution caps from $50,000 and $100,000 down to $25,000 across the board. Anyone who wants to save more than $25,000 per annum, which includes their compulsory superannuation contribution, has to pay more tax.

The decision that they have taken in this bill to go after more lost super more quickly is expected to raise an extra $555 million in the six months from 31 December 2012 to 30 June 2013. You need only look at the quantum that the government hopes to reap from these changes to know that there will be many millions of Australians who will be affected by this bill.

The government have a litany of challenges before them because, through their waste and mismanagement, they have spent all the money that was saved by the previous coalition government and they are now making a number of unfunded promises for the future. Those unfunded promises have now hit over $120 billion. That is on top of the debt that they have to pay back of $147.3 billion. That is on top of the interest bill that they are obviously paying on the debt of over $8 billion. You can now add onto that $120 billion in unfunded promises—the black hole that the government desperately needs to fill.

We know that there is only one way that they can achieve that. That is by increasing taxes and by slugging the Australian people even more. So it causes us great concern that the government have brought in a very rushed piece of legislation, one that does not bear much scrutiny at all before you realise that there are significant deficiencies, so much so that the government have already made a number of changes to the legislation while we have been debating this bill.

Instead, we say the government should take the bill off the table. The government should give it the proper scrutiny it deserves. The government should be honest with the Australian people, not try and pass this bill through the dead of night this evening and pass it through the Senate this week so that it can go on its cash grab. We think that the government should set it aside, be honest, start again and take responsibility for its poor financial decisions rather than making the Australian people pay. (Time expired)

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (19:52): In my years in this House I have never seen a more duplicitous document than the explanatory memorandum for this bill, the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012. In fact, it is an underhanded bill. It is a bill that will enable this government to get its hands on Australians' money. It is that simple. The money that the government is going to get its hands on is long-term unclaimed money found in bank accounts, perhaps including first home owner accounts and retirement savings accounts, insurance policies and superannuation accounts—your money.

For some time the government has been able to claim money to the credit of an account that has not been operated on by either deposit or withdrawal for a period of not less than seven years. But the bill before the House reduces the period for such money to just three years. Obviously this is a windfall for a very desperate government, a government that we know cannot balance its budget or rein in its spending. It is one more way that the Labor government has its hands in Australians' pockets.

In addition, superannuation accounts holding less than $200 are currently able to be raided by the government. The bill will
raise this to $2,000—another government windfall. In addition, it will shorten the time frame for activity that labels a superannuation account inactive from five years to just one year. Do we really need any further proof that the government has both of its hands deep into the pockets of the Australian people? There could be many, many reasons why an account is inactive for those periods. During that time the government is going to take that money.

The audacity of the wording in the explanatory memorandum, however, really should outrage all Australians. In an attempt to sugar-coat a very bitter pill, the bill purports and pretends to save account holders by claiming that they are more likely to get their money back under the new regime. Specifically, the memorandum states:

The Bill will bring forward the time at which money is recognised under the relevant law as lost or unclaimed, helping to reunite people with their money earlier, and will protect superannuation account balances transferred to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) from erosion by fees and charges.

From this statement, perhaps the reader could reasonably infer that more money will be returned to account holders, reuniting people with their money earlier. The reality in fact is absolutely the reverse, and this is amply demonstrated if you just go a bit further down in the memorandum. Under the heading 'Financial impact', we read:

Measures in Schedules 1, 2 and 3 are estimated to provide savings to the Budget—

and a saving to the budget is a cost to an Australian—

of $92.3 million over the forward estimates period …

So there we see that money will be taken from Australians. The government will reap an additional $92.3 million by taking it from Australian citizens whose accounts have been inactive.

It may be a small bank account they have. It might be a holiday savings account. We are heading into Christmas. Maybe it was set up originally as a Christmas treat, to save for that overseas trip. You may not have contributed to or moved funds in and out of that account. Or perhaps it could be a forgotten life insurance policy that has matured but not been converted. This happens in the community. It may be a savings account started by grandparents or parents for their children. These can sit inactive for some time. It might well be the account of someone on an overseas posting who may well take more than three years to return. Or it might be that people are not using their accounts because they are suffering from an extended period of illness.

The figure of $92 million also includes first home owner accounts and retirement savings accounts. Many of these can be left untouched for years, especially when a family or an individual is facing hardship. They may not be able to contribute further for a time, but they are often resistant to taking money out until it is really needed. It is an absolute last resort, or it is their nest egg for when things get better and they can make good decisions in their lives. People need to be careful that the Treasurer's own last resort is going to come before their own—that $1.1 billion surplus that he is chasing, based on the fact that he has wasted so much of taxpayers' funds. The money will be taken by the government before the owner of that money finally hits that last desperate state and goes looking for it to find it is not there. Perhaps at a time when you need it most and count on it most, thinking that it is in that account, no, it will not be. This Treasurer will have it.
However, the first three schedules represent a relatively small saving. It is sort of stealthy and sleight of hand, if you will. By comparison, the memorandum states:

… measures in Schedule 4 are estimated to provide savings to the Budget of $675.2 million over the forward estimates period …

Therefore, claiming superannuation at one year instead of five and for amounts of up to $2,000 instead of $200 will rake in two-thirds of a billion dollars of your money for this government. So, while there has been some support for an increase in the threshold, the impacts really do need to be assessed.

Schedule 5 sees an additional impost on business which is estimated to provide savings to the budget of $118.5 million over the forward estimates period. That is a total impost, an extra tax grab—call it what it is—on Australian citizens of nearly $900 million.

Debate interrupted.

**DELEGATION REPORTS**

**Parliamentary Delegation to Solomon Islands and Samoa**

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (20:00): I present the report of the Australian parliamentary delegation to Solomon Islands and Samoa. The membership of the delegation apart from me were the Hon. Peter Slipper, member for Fisher; Senator the Hon. Ian Macdonald, a Queensland senator; Deborah O’Neill, member for Robertson; Senator Claire Moore, another Queensland senator; and the delegation secretary, Nina Markovic. The delegation visited Solomon Islands between 31 July and 5 August 2011, and Samoa between 6 and 11 August 2011. The challenges which Solomon Islands and Samoa are facing today are common challenges for our shared future in the Asia-Pacific region.

In Solomon Islands, we received a comprehensive briefing from the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, RAMSI, about the security situation in Solomon Islands, and we toured their base. The government of Solomon Islands invited the regional assistance force in 2003 to help restore law and order after a period of protracted communal violence and the breakdown of security. The delegation was very impressed with the scope of activities in which RAMSI has taken part over the last few years, and we want to publicly express our gratitude to the remaining Australian troops which contribute to the combined task force. The delegation was made aware that some sectors of Solomon Islands society fear what will happen to the maintenance of law and order after the RAMSI mission is completed over the coming years.

We also learnt about key resource projects in Solomon Islands, such as the country’s largest industrial forestry project, Kolombangara, and the Gold Ridge mine, which is managed by an Australian company, both of which the delegation visited.

Solomon Islands is an archipelago country which consists of more than 900 islands. Its population in 2011 was 552,000 people. I observe that it has seen a very rapid increase since the time of independence. Australia and Solomon Islands have a longstanding partnership which is underpinned by growing commercial ties.

One of the areas that we took an interest in was the role of Australian aid in the creation of a national diabetes awareness program in the National Referral Hospital, which the delegation learnt had already had quite some success. However, the conditions in this hospital warrant improvement. There are large waiting lines and a lack of beds for some patients, who were actually lying on
the ground. In the remote communities, access to adequate health services remains a major challenge. Malaria continues to be a serious health risk, with dozens of children and adults dying each year as a consequence of this mosquito-borne disease.

In Solomon Islands we also met with women leaders. Women continue to face economic and social barriers to full societal participation in Solomon Islands, including in national politics.

We also welcomed Australia’s parliamentary twinning project between the New South Wales parliament and the national parliament of Solomon Islands, which allows practical support through staff placements, training, secondments and hands-on knowledge transfer.

I turn now to Samoa. Its population in 2011 was around 183,000. It has been very stable in the years since independence—and, for someone like me, with an interest in population issues, it was noticeable that Samoa is conspicuously more politically stable than the Solomons, which has experienced much more rapid population growth post independence.

We also learnt about the parliamentary twinning project there. The Tasmanian parliament is twinned with the parliament of Samoa. We appreciated the opportunity to visit Savai'i as well as the main island of Upolu, where we visited tsunami affected areas. We also talked about non-communicable diseases, which are a major issue throughout Samoa.

Australia's interests in Solomon Islands and Samoa are very well served by Australian officers posted from various department and agencies. I thank them on behalf of the delegation. I would like to extend our special thanks to His Excellency Matthew Anderson, the High Commissioner to Solomon Islands, and to His Excellency Dr Stephen Henningham, the High Commissioner to Samoa, and their staff, whose liaison with host institutions and support during our delegation's visit ensured its success.

BILLS

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Making Marine Parks Accountable) Bill 2012 [No. 2]

Second Reading

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (20:05): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Making Marine Parks Accountable) Bill 2012 is about motivation.

It goes to what the drivers are behind the declaration of a marine park.

It ensures that any government seeking to declare a marine park can adequately answer the question: why?

Why is this marine park being declared?

It is a perfectly valid question and it is a question the Gillard Labor government cannot adequately answer.

Using the same excuse that was trotted out for the carbon tax—'The Greens made me do it'—simply will not cut it.

It certainly did not cut it for anglers when the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities made the rushed declaration of marine parks two weeks ago.

Jim Harnwell, the managing director of advocacy group Keep Australia Fishing, which represents five million anglers, said:

There was no scientific rationale behind the government's moves to lock anglers out of 1.3 million square kilometres of ocean. We've been asking for years why we need to be locked out.
However, Minister Burke has never yet answered our questions. All we can do is keep asking: Why are you doing this to us?
The best answer that Minister Burke could come up with was this. He said:

Australia's oceans support many of the world's endangered marine animals including the Green Turtle, the Blue Whale, the Southern Right Whale, the Australian Sea Lion and the whale shark.

Well, when dad takes the kids out fishing for the weekend, I really do not know how many blue whales they are going to take home or how they would cook a southern right whale or a sea lion for dinner, but the environment minister can now rest easy in the knowledge that the whales, the sea lions and the whale sharks will be safe from Australia's recreational fishers as long as they stay inside the marine park boundaries that he declared.

I am not actually sure that the minister understands what recreational fishing is all about.

Allan Hansard, the Director of the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation, was quoted in my local newspaper, the Daily Mercury, on November 16, asking this:
What does Mum, Dad and the kids fishing … do to the environment that warrants them being locked out of vast areas of Australian waters, whether the marine parks are five or 500 kilometres from a boat ramp.

He said:

Australia's five million recreational fishers applaud good science based conservation measures that protect our marine environment for future generations …

… However, the Government's Marine Park Plan lacks scientific reasoning and—there is—no explanation why Aussie recreational fishers are banned from marine parks.

If peer-reviewed scientific studies proved that a particular species targeted by recreational fishers, or commercial fishermen, for that matter, was an endangered species in the Coral Sea, then fishing families and the rest of Australia could probably understand bag limits and no-take zones.

But the Labor Party and the Greens are kidding themselves if they think locking a relatively small number of fishers out of an area already teeming with fish will make any environmental difference, because fish cannot read maps.

Owner of Mackay Reef Fish Supplies, David Caracciolo, describes the concept of the marine park as fundamentally flawed. He says:

If the idea of a marine park is to conserve the animals or stock in it, to me it is hypocritical … … A lot of these fish are migratory, you could say we are farming them for other countries to benefit.

What is more, Lance Murray, the President of the Mackay Regional Recreational Fishers, points out the reserves would place pressure on nearby fishing grounds, meaning there would be more competition for recreational anglers.

He said:

What'll happen is commercial fishers are going to be compensated but that'll also add pressure to other areas, which creates a funnel situation.
The minister and his cronies have tried to pretend no-one fishes in the Coral Sea at iconic fishing spots like Marion Reef, because that is 300 kilometres off the coastline.

Well, if no-one fishes out there, if no-one is fishing in these areas, then why are we locking them up?

Here is a dose of the truth—taken from the Nomad Sportfishing Adventures, which
takes people fishing out to Marion Reef, one of those areas which is actually going to be locked up. They say:
Throughout each year, we fish the entire 1500 mile length of this reef system, moving between the most remote areas of the reef, to ensure you the absolute best fishing every week.
Nomad's owner, Damon Olsen, says 'travelling way out to Marion Reef on a calm ocean is one of the truly special experiences in the fishing world'.

In his report on a trip to Marion Reef with Nomad, Glanville Heydenrych had this to say about a fishing spot the minister would have us believe no-one visits:
… without a doubt some of the best fishing experiences I have ever uncounted in the Coral Sea and feel blessed to be a part of it, it just makes you hope that we will be allowed to partake in fishing here in the future, trust me this is a place you want to visit and having the government close this beautiful part of Australia due to some political uprising is a disgusting shame to say the least!!! Everybody should have the right to have the opportunity to experience the beauties of the Coral Sea, I am one for sure who would love to go back there …
Mr Olsen, in his blog, apologises for making fishing political, but he goes on to say:
… there are times when you just have to stand up and be counted, as the alternative is to sit back and watch many of the areas you love to fish get closed over the next few months and years.
On one hand, we have the environment minister telling us how important it is to lock people out of the Coral Sea and, on the other, the same environment minister is trying to convince us that the closure is not going to affect anyone because no-one goes out there.
You cannot have this both ways.

In recognition of the fact that some of our fishing industry will be forced to close down, the environment minister is actually putting $100 million worth of compensation on the table—an amount that is widely regarded by the industry as desperately insufficient.

There is no compensation for the businesses behind recreational fishing and an inadequate $100 million on the table for commercials.

If that is all the fishing industry is worth—over a million square kilometres of ocean—then why is it being closed down?

Australia has some of the most underfished waters in the world and closing down our seafood industry will only increase imports from some of the world's most overfished waters. That is the height of hypocrisy.

How does the government determine that to be a good environmental outcome?

Damon Olsen, from Nomad Sportfishing, is all in favour of marine parks if they are done for a reason—for the right reason—which is what this bill before us will ensure.

Mr Olsen says:
All recreational fishing groups support closed off areas, but only when thorough scientific processes have shown that these closed off areas are required. The current process is closing off huge areas to recreational fishermen simply so the government can keep green groups happy and stay in power.
The massive problem that we face here is that Science has long ago been abandoned by the politicians, and they are now playing a game of drawing colours on maps simply to keep the powerful and well funded green lobby groups at bay.
He goes on to say:
I have a first hand example of this from the meeting with the federal environment minister. The current process is proposing to close off the main area of the Perth trench to all gamefishing activities, essentially shutting down the entire gamefishing industry and community in Perth. We asked the minister why this zone had been placed in it's proposed position. We were told that the minister drew that zone himself because they
needed one in that area, and there was no information to tell him where to put it, so he just placed it where he thought was appropriate.

That is great! Science by felt pen!

Obviously, this bill was aimed to stop the reckless announcement made by the environment minister some 10 days ago, and some people in this place may have a concern that the declaration of the marine parks will negate this bill.

I want to signal my intention right here and now that, if this bill should reach the consideration in detail stage, I will move an amendment that will negate the declaration of the marine protected areas that was made by the minister earlier this month, and then he would have to follow the accountable processes that are set forth in this bill before the House to create any new marine park in Australia. That would include a range of things, from allowing this parliament to have a say on it by making it a declarable instrument and by also ensuring that there are community stakeholder advisory groups set up so that there is real consultation on this, not the fake consultation that the minister has put forward. There would also be scientific review panels established to assess the conservation value. All of these things are in this bill.

I would urge particularly the crossbenchers, who might think that this matter is put to bed with the minister’s declaration, to think again. They still have the ability to negate what the minister has done. Instead of having marine parks based on the extreme green agenda and science by felt pen, they can be based on real science with real consultation, real accountability and real transparency, and this parliament can make decisions as it is created to do. Hopefully this bill will be accepted by this parliament. Hopefully this bill will restore balance. Hopefully this bill will make the marine parks process accountable, as it is intended to do.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams): Is there a seconder for the bill?

Ms Ley: It is with delight that I second the bill for the member for Dawson.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (20:15): I rise to speak in opposition to this proposed bill, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Making Marine Parks Accountable) Bill 2012, which represents a continuation of the coalition running interference on what is an historic achievement by the Labor government in announcing the final network of Commonwealth marine reserves.

I want to congratulate the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Minister Burke, who, on 16 November, announced that Australia’s precious marine environments have been permanently protected, with the proclamation of the world’s biggest network of marine reserves—that is, more than 2.3 million square kilometres of ocean environment. The declaration of these new marine reserves delivers on an election commitment and represents a major achievement for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of Australia’s oceans. Australia’s oceans support many of the world’s endangered marine animals, including the green turtle, the blue whale, the southern right whale, the Australian sea lion and the whale shark.

In May this year, a number of us in parliament were fortunate enough to hear an inspiring address from the author Tim Winton about the importance of marine parks. It reinforced my view that this is an opportunity for us as a parliament to do great things that future generations will be proud of. I would like to share with the parliament what Tim Winton had to say about this issue.
It is important to highlight it to negate some of the short-sightedness of the bill before the House and because I cannot improve on Tim Winton's words. Tim himself is a very keen recreational fisher. He says that fishing is in his blood. Indeed, my own father, Allan, and my brothers Lex and Daryl are keen fishermen. Tim Winton says:

During my own lifetime the world's oceans have suffered a terrible decline. I've read about it. And I've seen it up close and ugly. When I lived in Greece I saw the results of oil spills, dynamite fishing, lax regulation. I've surfed in raw sewage in Indonesia and putrid medical waste in Brazil. And I've wondered: am I swimming in the future?

... The global trends aren't great. Collapsing fisheries, dying corals, gyres of plastic the size of entire countries, catastrophic oil spills that ruin the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of fishing families and poison the food chain for decades.

Okay, I tell myself. All this is happening abroad, in someone else's ocean. But we're not immune. Not after the Montara spill. Not when a recent spike in sea temperature caused a mass kill of abalone on the mid-west coast and shut down the fishery until further notice …

Many of my neighbours are commercial fishermen. Lots of my friends are marine scientists. They don't always agree with each other, though they're all passionate about Australia's seas and want to do what they can to keep them healthy. But none of them is telling me that things are getting better and better here at home.

... I don't think we'll pass on a dead ocean. I can't think that. … We have comparatively decent fisheries management and many good fishing operators. Still, consumption only goes up and the resource doesn't get any bigger. We all know we're pushing the ocean too hard. And the pressure to relegate marine protection - to defer it - that pressure is intense. And the balance is not in the ocean's favour. Taking a loss has become business as usual. Where else, in what other field, would mediocre outcomes be so acceptable?

We have to stop spending beyond our means. Robbing Peter to pay Paul. Otherwise we'll be the generation - the richest, most mobile and well-educated generation in Australia's history - that passes on a dud inheritance, and leaves the estate in arrears. Bequeathing a loss to a family, a community, a nation, that's a despicable thing to do …

The great news is we haven't blown it yet. We still have incredible assets to reserve and build upon: immense underwater canyons and sea mounts, fringing reefs, barrier reefs. Remote archipelagos teeming with birds and turtles. Precious inshore habitats, breeding grounds. Intricate coral atolls that are thrumming engines of oceanic life. These miracles of nature are our good and great fortune. They aren't just sources of protein. They're also food for thought, fields of scientific discovery. They are reservoirs of life inextricably entwined with our own. Because the health of the sea determines our human future. Yes, we have compromised great ecosystems already. We've made mistakes. And we've improved our game. But there's a gap between our aspirations and our achievements when it comes to stewardship. We must do better. We will do better. If we act now.

... ... ...

Commonwealth waters are public assets. The family silver. Silver that moves, breathes, swims. If you've ever swum in a school of trevally or barracuda or anchovies, you'll know what I mean; it's like being Scrooge McDuck rolling around in the vault. These riches are entrusted to government by the people. That trust, gravity of the task, has come into sharp focus in recent years. And in the past decade, in a groundswell of public consciousness that I simply didn't see coming, citizens have begun to expect a new level of accountability in marine stewardship. Why the sea? Well, because as much as they love the bush, Australians spend more time on the water. And they travel abroad – especially to places where they swim and surf and fish. Like me, I guess, they've come to see what we stand to lose. What the worst future looks and feels and tastes and smells like. So they value their marine inheritance much more consciously and vividly than you may realize. They expect the managers of their marine birthright to act prudently, conservatively. Which means they expect proper fisheries management.
They want to know there are genuine limits to the incursions of oil and gas, that a marine system is at least as important as a coal-mine, or a port. Most importantly they expect government to hold significant marine assets in reserve by way of parks and sanctuaries. Where people can visit but not extract anything.

There's a precedent for this, one that makes sense to ordinary people. Generations ago, when our nation was far less prosperous, far less educated, far less certain of its place in the world, our forebears set aside habitats and ecosystems on land in the form of national parks and reserves. Pretty brave at the time. This was their gift to the future. The kind of sacrifice Australians instinctively understand and celebrate. You and I inherited the fruit of that enlightened impulse. We enjoy the work and the courage of those Australian thinkers and legislators who came before. And now, from the fringes of our cities, from the very hearts of our cities in some instances, right out to the interior, there are wild places to which we can take our children, where we study, or simple stare in awe—because someone fifty, sixty, seventy years ago was visionary enough, decent enough, and courageous enough to make it happen, to reserve a share of the family silver for us. You and I are connected to those visionaries by that patriotic impulse, that love of country, that love of family.

So now in 2012 we're on the cusp of achieving something like that in the sea. A system of marine parks for the nation. A network of representative ecosystems reserved for conservation purposes. It's the outcome of a process that's not owned by any narrow political interest. It's taken years of study and consultation, been overseen and supported by governments, both Liberal and Labor. It has the potential—if we hold our nerve and follow through—to be one of the great moments of marine stewardship. Of environmental responsibility. But also one of the great moments of Australian patriotism when our belief in the common good shines through, when we show our higher selves to our selves and to those unborn.

I conclude by paraphrasing Tim Winton by saying that 'this is a genuine legacy moment'. When your grandkids ask, 'What did you do as a member of parliament?' tax reform might do it, or that parliamentary committee. But in that rare moment when a little kid looks up at you with a flicker of interest or even a moment of admiration, my money is on the dolphins and on the marine parks.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (20:26): I rise to speak on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Making Marine Parks Accountable) Bill 2012, and I proudly support my good friend and member for Dawson. I would like to take up a couple of points made by the member for Wills. I do not think that anyone could possibly doubt his love for the environment and that sort of thing. Before the Montara spill—before they put that well there—the Australian Institute of Marine Science surveyed that entire place. They put good baseline research into the place. After the spill was cleaned up they went back to see what damage there was. There was none. That is good science. That is knowing what is out there and knowing what is at risk. That is knowing that, if there is damage, what
there is to clean up. The green zones established over the reefs in North Queensland and along the coast were based on science. They did not make a lot of people happy, but they were based on good science. They have been proved to be successful. It was a great effort and the environment has no greater friend than Liberal governments. I would say to the member for Wills: ‘You can't have it both ways. You can't trot Tim Winton out to say we are fishing out the place and then stand beside the minister who says, "It is so far out, no-one can even get out there".’

It just goes to show how duplicitous and shifty this government is that they will change the argument to suit the audience. That is what bothers me most. The problem with this argument is that when you say to someone in Melbourne that we should protect the sea, all you see is sea; that is the mental image, and there is nothing on top of it. You do not see anything underneath, you do not see the jobs that go with it, because they are all on the land. If you say to people that we have to protect forests, people immediately see roads, trees, chainsaws, trucks, towns. They see all the implications of making those sorts of decisions. That is the problem with this decision.

We held a forum—the first of many, I believe—in relation to this proposal and what has come to pass. I do not mind a bet and at that time I said that I would take any money that the area marked out by the felt pen on the Coral Sea would be exactly where the marine park would go once the consultation period ended. We have seen exactly that happen. We have now seen the Protect the Coral Sea campaign up the ante and call for even more closures closer to Cairns—more closures of reefs and fishing areas to shut down further industry. At that fishing forum there were a number of resolutions passed. First and foremost was the one about recreational fishing as a lifestyle issue for North Queenslanders. It is a right to be protected.

The Coral Sea Marine Park is a long way from Townsville, but this government has shown a willingness to go back on anything it says before an election. At every turn this government does something to suit itself at the expense of the recreational fisher. We campaigned in 2010 to say that a vote for Labor was a vote to close down the Coral Sea, and the Labor candidate at the time said, ‘No, it's not,’ and poked me in the chest and swore at me on the radio. But it has come to pass that exactly what we said would happen has happened.

Science should be the guide to the establishment of a marine reserve off the north coast of Australia. Any decision to establish a marine park should be overturned by a subsequent government until the scientific case for its establishment can be made. That was the second resolution passed at the fishing forum, and it was passed unanimously by the people who were there because that is what they care about. This government talks about science and various causes, but the Australian Institute of Marine Science has a $120 million boat down at the marina in Townsville with no fuel to run it on and no operational funding—the operational funding has been cut. At the fishing forum we asked that artificial reefs be established in yellow zones where there would be one rod, one angler and one hook. At the fishing forum we even passed a resolution that no anchor could be used and that fishers would just trawl or drift across the place. We asked for a science based review of the green zones to make sure that they were working as well as we suspected. We also wanted to make sure that the Coral Sea is protected. The greatest protector of the Coral Sea and marine parks in general is the weather. If the wind is blowing at between
five knots and 10 knots, everyone is going out for a fish. But, if it is blowing stronger than 10 knots, no one goes out. You can go eight, 10 or 12 weeks without a fish up there.

Work needs to be done to change the negative perception of North Queenslanders as recreational fishers. (Time expired)

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (20:31): I rise to speak in opposition to this bill, which would put the hugely significant marine conservation outcomes that this government has achieved in partnership and in trust with the Australian community at threat. For anyone to sensibly support the legislative amendments that this bill contains they would need to agree with its underlying premise, which is that the government's secured set of marine reserves has been achieved without the benefit of appropriate scientific data and analysis, without independent economic impact assessments and without the guidance of appropriate stakeholder and community consultation—and that is, frankly, a ludicrous proposition.

In an article published on 27 August this year and titled 'Marine reserves not about closing fisheries, but about preserving ocean health', Dr Nic Bax, Stream Leader, Understanding Ocean Ecosystems at CSIRO, and Dr Ian Cresswell, Director, Wealth from Oceans Flagship at CSIRO, concluded with the following:

The CMR network and marine bioregional planning herald a substantial change in the way Australia manages its marine environment. The potential impacts extend well beyond fishery management.

Importantly the marine bioregional framework provides a clear and consistent framework for Australia that will help make future management decisions and help focus the social, economic and environmental research to support those decisions. It will set clear and measurable objectives within a clear reporting process. This will provide the impetus and direction for science to reduce the uncertainty about whether we are achieving those objectives and the broader goals they serve.

Australia provides world leadership in the policy and science of marine ecosystem management and is likely to be one of the few countries to achieve the international commitment made at Rio+10 in 2002 to develop a representative system of marine reserves by 2012.

Last week the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities sealed one of the greatest environment achievements in Australian history when he proclaimed the network of marine protected areas, including the south-west marine bioregional area. That proclamation, long-sought and hard-won, represents a marine and environmental legacy for future generations unparalleled in our history.

The marine bioregional plan is a reform that has been painstakingly achieved. Like many members of this place, I have personally worked with professional and recreational fishers in my electorate to facilitate their input and to help them seek refinements in the protection scheme to ensure that the marine conservation outcomes achieved were at their highest without having unnecessary impact on fishing and other uses. I have also worked extensively with marine scientists and marine conservation advocates to argue for improvements to early versions of the network, which simply did not provide enough protection in some areas.

In considering the economic impacts, the government's 2011 fisheries adjustment policy very clearly set out the assessments required for the establishment of marine reserves. The policy is wholly consistent with the coalition's 2004 policy. Under the adjustment policy, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, ABARES, was engaged to prepare
independent socioeconomic assessments for each proposed marine reserve. The production of the assessments involved data collection and consultation, including the creation of industry reference groups. All the ABARES reports are, of course, publicly available. The government acknowledges that the creation of the reserves necessary to properly protect Australia's range of unique and precious ecosystems and our marine biodiversity, which has already suffered significant losses, will involve some economic impact and that those affected must receive appropriate assistance.

On a side note: I am pleased to see that the Centre for Policy Development has produced analysis showing that the proposed Commonwealth network of marine reserves will cover an area that delivers $1.2 billion dollars in what is termed 'ecosystem service value' based on estimates derived using a UN environment program study. This value is not currently recognised in our economic models or analysis.

The proclamation of the new marine protected areas by the minister on the Friday before last was welcomed by tens of thousands of Australians, and I received letters or emails from approximately 750 constituents who wanted to support and reinforce the importance of this historic reform. The new marine reserves increase the Commonwealth network of protected areas to 2.3 million square kilometres. In WA these areas include critical feeding and birthing zones for the blue whale. They cover the Perth Canyon and the Abrolhos, the Recherche Archipelago, Geographe Bay and the Naturaliste Plateau. Many of these environmental 'wonderlands'—or 'wonderseas'—have been zones of legend in WA for years, but some of them are even better known and regarded now, especially by young people in my electorate, as a result of the thorough marine protection process that we have been through.

The principles and the framework for protecting Australia's ocean ecosystems through the marine bioregional planning process are robust in themselves. They have been improved since their operation under the former government. They are fit for the purpose of securing the environmental legacy that future generations deserve. As our own experts at the CSIRO note, they are world-leading. The Member for Dawson's proposed changes to the legislative provisions of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act are unnecessary, unjustified, inconsistent and costly, and they cannot be supported. *(Time expired)*

**Mr ENTSCH** (Leichhardt—Chief Opposition Whip) (20:36): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this bill. Quite frankly, the process under which the Coral Sea marine reserve was declared last week is an absolute disgrace. For generations this resource has been fished in a totally sustainable way; the fact that the area is now judged worthy of being a marine reserve is testament to that.

The bill would require the environment minister to fulfil four requirements before declaring an area a marine reserve. Firstly, he must commission an independent social and economic impact assessment so that the government and affected communities are fully aware of the long-term ramifications. What concerns me is that even before ABARES had completed its socio-economic report on the impact of the MPA, Ministers Burke and Ludwig—clairvoyants that they are, and we have seen that more recently with the live trade debacle—announced a nationwide assistance package in the vicinity of $100 million.
In Cairns we have a very well-regarded, experienced and independent economist named Bill Cummings. Earlier this year, Mr Cummings was commissioned by Cairns Regional Council to examine the economic impact of declaring the Coral Sea as a marine reserve. What became immediately evident on seeing his findings was how short-sighted this government has been in only assessing the immediate economic impact on commercial operators. They have not considered the flow-on effects to businesses further down the chain, the likely future growth and opportunities forgone in the future, the management cost impacts and the losses to post shipside activity. On the other hand, Mr Cummings has and what he found is quite frightening. By looking at these other impacts, and extrapolating them over 30 years—that is a standard economic forecast—he has come up with a cost, just for the Cairns region, of $1 billion. That is a billion dollars in a region with one of the highest unemployment figures in the country, contributing to the economic black hole that Labor has already got this country into over the past five years.

Secondly, this bill requires the government to obtain scientific peer-reviewed and publicly available advice before making any proclamations. There is no denying the fact that the government cannot produce any scientific evidence to show a threat from fishing activities to species in the Coral Sea. Just as with the last-minute banning of the MV Margiris, this government continues to ignore science. Take a look at this article from the Cairns Post on 20 November celebrating the fact that overseas buyers are 'lining up to take product from the Northern Prawn Fishery after its sustainable certification by the Marine Stewardship Council'. Gaining this certification is no mean feat. It proves that the operators in this fishery are using world's best practice to harvest their catch sustainably with less impact on the environment and on the by-catch. So what does this government do? It takes this certification and rubbishes it by declaring the Coral Sea as a marine reserve, shutting down 20 per cent of the Northern Prawn Fishery. What about the millions these operators have invested and the thousands of jobs they support? I just shake my head in disbelief.

The third requirement of this bill is that the government must establish independent reference panels and stakeholder groups in each region to ensure rigorous decision making. What does that mean? It means no more whistle-stop tours where the minister has already made up his mind; it means no more backhanded swapping of areas to keep marginal Labor MPs out of the firing line; it means no more playing industry groups off each other, bargaining with boundaries to buy support; and it means no more bowing to the pressure of green-euxious overseas lobby groups, like the PEW foundation, who do not have the courage to take on the polluters and the over-fishers in their own waters.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this bill will put parliament in charge of final decisions by making declarations disallowable, scrapping the carte blanche powers that the minister clearly has abused.

To close, left as it stands the Coral Sea marine reserve is a failure for sustainability, it is a nail in the coffin for family owned businesses and it is a death knell for highly exploited species in Third World fisheries. This bill, put up by the member for Dawson, will instead provide a framework of accountability and transparency around the creation of marine reserves, and that is why I wholly support it here today.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (20:41): I join my colleagues the member for Wills and the member for Fremantle in speaking against
this private member's bill. As my colleagues have already pointed out, on 16 November environment minister Tony Burke proclaimed that 2.3 million square kilometres of ocean environment would be permanently protected and that new management plans for those areas will come into effect in July 2014.

The proclamation follows a lengthy public consultation process during which some 80,000 submissions were received. As part of that public consultation process, the public had the opportunity to put forward their views on the marine reserves proposals during 90-day public consultation processes in each region, at the 245 stakeholder meetings held around the country and during the most recent 60-day consultation on the final proposal. To say that this was a decision made by the minister without any consultation and without any consideration for those impacted by it is simply incorrect. The facts speak for themselves. In fact, I know this process has been ongoing for two or three years at least, if not longer, so there has been plenty of time for communities around the country to put their points of view forward to the minister, and in fact those points of view have been heard as part of the final outcome of that consultation process.

I understand that current arrangements for industry and recreational fishers will remain in place until the new management plans take effect, in July 2014. This means that there is still over 18 months to go before the new plans come into effect. Again, that is in order to give communities time to transition. In his speech on 17 September on the second reading the member for Dawson claimed that the minister's declaration was 'not the result of rigorous scientific analysis', that there has not been 'extensive industry or community consultation', that the government has 'not engaged in proper consultation' and that the government has 'no consideration for Australia's fishers or the coastal communities'. Furthermore he stated that the government has 'failed to understand the importance of recreational fishing' and has 'failed to consider the important economic contribution that recreational fishing makes to coastal communities'.

I reject all of those assertions and in fact, as I outlined a moment ago, the extensive consultation process the government has undertaken as part of the announcement made by the minister on 16 November simply dismisses all of those claims. The member for Dawson, through his bill, wants the minister to commission an independent social and economic impact assessment before any proclamations are made. His bill will also require the minister to obtain independent scientific peer reviewed advice. As the member for Fremantle has already pointed out, the current proposals were the subject of a considerable amount of scientific advice.

The member for Dawson's bill will also require:
… that the Government establish an independent scientific reference panel as well as a stakeholder advisory group so that decisions are made with rigour following extensive consultation and analysis of the possible scientific and social impacts of any proposed marine protected areas.

What the member for Dawson is really saying is that he wants to make the process so cumbersome that it will be difficult to implement—if indeed implementation ever occurs. In other words, he does not want anything to happen and he wants to make the process cumbersome to ensure that is exactly the outcome—that nothing will ever happen.

He also implies that the scientific advice provided in the existing process by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and other marine science centres is unreliable and that we cannot rely on it. I reject that assertion. I have spoken to some
of the scientists who deal with marine issues for this country and I have nothing but praise for, and confidence in, their work. They were the very people who provided advice to the government in this process and who, at the very least, would have had the opportunity to make their own submissions. To suggest we need to have additional scientific advice is, in my view, suggesting that we should not rely on the scientists who have contributed so far.

There is another element of the member for Dawson’s plan which concerns me. It says that the parliament should make the final decision. On the one hand, he is saying that we should have all of these experts—peer reviewed expert advice—on the panels. But, on the other hand, he says that their advice can be ignored. He says that the parliament, a group of nonprofessionals, should make the ultimate decision. Why would we get that advice if it is not needed? (Time expired)

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (20:46): In a little while, I plan to present a petition which has been found to be in order by the Petitions Committee and which has been signed by 4,541 Australians. I support the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Making Marine Parks Accountable) Bill 2012 introduced into the chamber by the member for Dawson. I acknowledge the passionate way he has represented his constituents since his election to this House. This bill proposes to insert a process into the EPBC Act to ensure that, prior to the declaration of any marine protected areas, the relevant minister will be required to commission an independent social and economic impact assessment before any proclamations are made.

The bill has become necessary because of the way the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Tony Burke, has gone about the latest designation of the marine protected area in the Coral Sea. The consistent feedback—it has been consistent every step of the way—from stakeholders has been that the current process of establishing marine park boundaries completely failed to include any genuine consultation and failed to recognise that Australian fisheries are amongst the healthiest and best managed in the world—as highlighted in the latest Commonwealth fisheries status report released in November 2011.

The government has not engaged in proper consultation—their approach has been take it or leave it. There has been no consideration for Australian fisheries or the coastal communities which rely very heavily on this industry. There are also major concerns about the rigour and consistency of the science used to determine particular boundaries of proposed marine parks.

Let me make one point very clear, however. The coalition does support the designation of marine parks and marine protected areas. We have a very strong record on this. When it comes to the protection of our fisheries and environmental sustainability, we have a strong and long record. One of the things that I was most proud of as a member of the Howard government was the effort which resulted in the establishment of 11 marine protected areas. That included, in July 2004, a new zoning plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, which increased the areas protected from extractive activities from 4.6 per cent to 33.3 per cent of that park. These declarations were achieved with broad community and industry support. This demonstrates that it is possible to implement marine park zones with the support of both the scientific community and the other communities involved. It was a stepped and
staged process involving those communities all along the way.

I see the petition has arrived now and I plan to table it in just a little while.

This government has displayed a total lack of consultation. It is exactly the opposite of what we did in government when we first implemented the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. That is why this bill is necessary. It is necessary to give the industry and the communities confidence that decisions which governments make on the basis of environmental protection are genuinely made on those grounds alone—not based on some political ideology.

As set out in the explanatory memorandum, this bill will require the relevant minister to commission an independent social and economic impact assessment before any proclamations are made. The bill will require the minister to obtain independent scientific peer reviewed advice that is made publicly available. It will also require the government to establish an independent scientific reference panel, as well as a stakeholder advisory group, so that decisions are made with rigour following extensive consultation and analysis of the possible scientific, economic and social impacts of any proposed marine protected areas. Finally, the bill will put parliament in charge of final decisions by making declarations disallowable by the parliament.

I again remind the parliament of the very high levels of sustainability already observed by our fishing industry. As someone who has worked in this industry, I can endorse the view that Australia's fisheries are amongst the best managed in the world. (Time expired)

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (20:51): Australians know how fragile our marine life is and how important it is to protect it. We have completed a final network of Commonwealth marine reserves, and these will be managed to protect the unique biodiversity found in them, which is important for sustaining natural resources in the area. We think it is particularly important to do this. Those opposite in this chamber are simply opposing that which they previously had some commitment to when they created the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park back in 2006. Those opposite are no longer the party that was led by the member for Wentworth, that is for sure, and their opposition today goes to show just how narrow-minded they are.

The purpose of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Making Marine Parks Accountable) Bill is to stop, not simply delay, what we are doing. Those opposite are proposing in this legislation to create up to 88 regional committees for a period of two months to provide input into any future proposed marine reserves. This is economically stupid. They claim there are almost no financial implications for the Commonwealth. Those opposite simply do not get it with respect to protection of the environment. The member for Leichhardt talked about what the Cairns Regional Council did in commissioning a report from a local consultant which purported to show a $1 billion net economic impact on the Cairns regional economy, but flawed assumptions, deliberate misrepresentation and exaggeration of the federal Labor government's proposals underlayed that analysis. They ignore the fact that the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences were engaged to prepare an independent socioeconomic assessment for each of the proposed regional marine reserve networks. ABARES established reference groups with industry organisations, fisheries managers, fishing entitlement holders and fishing
businesses, and those reports are publicly available on the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities website.

Mr Katter: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was a member of the government party when this was done, and I claim to have been misrepresented. He is saying that the Liberals are opposed to the national park proposals. The Liberals closed down the entire fishing industry in North Queensland.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Symon): There is a time and a place for that. The member for Kennedy will resume his seat.

Mr NEUMANN: Those opposite are making all sorts of alarmist claims about financial Armageddon for the fishing industry, but that is at odds with what ABARES has had to say. The ABARES socioeconomic impact assessment predicts the value of the commercial fisheries catch displaced by the new marine reserves will be $11.1 million, which represents about one per cent of the annual value of catch, gross value of production, and about 103 jobs. That is what ABARES has had to say. They have run off with all sorts of scare campaigns. Senator Boswell has been talking about this, and we have had statements in the past by the member for Wentworth and the member for Curtin about it too. They will say one thing when they are in the capital cities of Australia about their commitments to marine parks but they will say another thing when they are up the coast of Queensland.

One thing that needs to be put on the table is how close the green zones and the new Commonwealth marine reserves are to towns along the Queensland coast. It is important to put this on the public record. Those opposite would have you believe that estuaries and lakes and beaches are all at risk, and that any person who gets in a tinny will be at risk when they leave Cairns and places like that. From Bundaberg, for example, the distance to the nearest marine park zone is 490 kilometres. From Brisbane it is 410 kilometres to the new Central Eastern Commonwealth Marine Reserve; Mooloolaba is 480 kilometres from that reserve—

Mr Katter: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is an outrageous misconception that the member for Blair is perpetrating on the House. The green zones stop almost all recreational fishing in Queensland.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy will resume his seat. The time allotted for this debate has expired; the debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

State Public Sector Employees

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (20:57): I move:

(1) notes with concern the recent and growing job losses in state governments around Australia, as well as the difficulties many state public sector employees face in bargaining over wages and conditions; and

(2) directs the Standing Committee on Education and Employment to inquire into and report on the conditions of employment of state public sector employees and the adequacy of protection of their rights at work as compared with other employees, including:

(a) whether:

(i) current state government industrial relation legislation provides state public sector workers with less protection and entitlements than workers to whom the Fair Work Act 2009 applies;

(ii) the removal of components of the long held principles relating to Termination, Change
and Redundancy from state legislation is a breach of obligations under the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions;

(iii) the rendering unenforceable of elements of existing collective agreements relating to employment security is a breach of the obligations under the ILO conventions relating to collective bargaining;

(iv) the current state government industrial relations frameworks provide protection to workers as required under the ILO conventions;

(v) state public sector workers face particular difficulties in bargaining under state or federal legislation; and

(vi) the Fair Work Act 2009 provides the same protections to public sector workers as it does to other workers; and

(b) what legislative or regulatory options are available to the Commonwealth to ensure that all Australian workers, including those in state public sectors, have adequate and equal protection of their rights at work.

Public sector workers around this country are under attack, no more so than in Queensland where 14,000 employees are slated to lose their jobs. You can add that to the 10,000 in New South Wales and the 4,200 in Victoria, and with promises of more to come there will be somewhere near 30,000 conservative state government employees losing their jobs.

The community understands the impact of this on the frontline services that they rely on; the community understands that it means their fellow community members are losing their jobs, with all the impacts that has on their families and consequentially on the public purse. It also means that the people who are left behind in these jobs are feeling increasingly insecure and they are under greater pressure to deliver the same services but with fewer resources.

It is not just about job losses; it is also about the contravention of some fundamental basic principles of dignity and people's rights to have a say in the decisions that are made in their workplaces. We saw in Queensland, for example, the government come in over the top of agreements reached between employees and employers and say, 'We do not like some of those causes so we are going to take them away because they seem to give employees some rights to participate in decisions that are made in their workplace.' Can you imagine the outcry if the Commonwealth government or a state government decided that it was going to step in and rewrite the terms of a lease, saying, 'We don't like the way you have negotiated that so we are going to take away a few of the benefits that one side has'? Similarly, if that happened with a commercial contract there would be an outcry from the conservatives, and yet it seems okay, when it comes to employees, to come in and rewrite agreements and take away some of their basic termination, change and redundancy provisions.

In my home state of Victoria I have seen the disadvantage that state public sector workers are at when it comes to bargaining under the current system. We have had nurses being put through the charade of bargaining that was extended for several years by a government that was hoping at some point the nurses would take industrial action so the bargaining period would be terminated and they would be taken to Fair Work Australia, where they knew that they would not be able to have their claim for nurse-patient ratios arbitrated. The teachers in Victoria have now become so fed up with the government's inaction and its refusal to come to the table that they have suspended bargaining and said they are not coming back until the government comes up with a proper proposal.

Around the country, state public sector workers reeling under the impacts of conservative state governments are now
saying we need to do more. They are coming to this place, the federal parliament, and saying, 'We want you to do more and to do what you can.' The Queensland Public Sector Union have been leading the charge both in their home state and here, but it is not just the union; it is also community members and workers. More than 20,000 people around the country have signed up to the together.org.au petition to urge this place to find out how it can take steps to protect public sector workers and then implement them.

That is why we are here debating this motion for an inquiry—to shine a light on what is happening in state governments around this country but also to answer the more fundamental question, the basic principle at the heart of this motion: how can we ensure that state public sector workers have the same level of protection as their federal counterparts?

Now, I do applaud the government for having taken some steps in this regard, but there is much more that could be done. For instance, as a final example, we need to ask the question: given that we as a country have signed up to various International Labour Organization conventions that give people basic rights—with regard to termination change and redundancy—to be involved in what happens in their workplace, has the Queensland government contravened that by unilaterally deciding to rewrite agreements and then proceeding to sack tens of thousands of those employees? That is just one of the questions that we would be able to get to the bottom of through this committee inquiry. This inquiry—if this motion succeeds and is passed by the House—will give us the opportunity over the coming months to allow those people who have been so devastated and affected by cuts that they never saw coming to get the gold-standard protection they deserve and that other employees in this country have.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Symon): Is the motion seconded?

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (21:02): I second the motion and I exercise my right to speak now. Some 14,500 public servants have been sacked in Queensland in the space of about seven months, and it is far from over. I belonged to the most efficient government ever. No-one has ever denied that the Bjelke-Petersen government was the most efficient economic performing government in Australian history. In its lifetime, it created the coal and aluminium industries, which carried this nation for some 25 years. The iron ore industry is now also carrying the nation, but those two industries carried it for 25 years and they were established by that government. I will tell you something, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker Symon: it was established by huge debt. We were the most indebted government in Australian history. No one will ever have the debt that we had.

To give an example of what we did to get that debt, we borrowed $1,000 million to build a railway line from nowhere to nowhere because we believed that, if we built that railway line, the coalmines would be able to open up and export coal overseas. This was a very radical proposal because Australia in 1959 was a coal-importing country. We were not a coal-exporting country, so the idea that we should export coal was radical. We spent $1,000 million, which was about a quarter of our entire budget. Was it a good decision? That railway did not service just Les Thiess, who said, 'If you build me a railway line, I'll open a coalmine.' It did not serve just Utah, who said, 'If you build us a railway line, we'll give you a coalmine.' There were 30 major mines using that railway line. Each year, we
made $850 million profit off that line and we made further profit on the port.

The Liberals have a rather crude, simplistic approach to economics. They believe economics is about cutting government spending. Would that it were that simple. If the Liberals had had control of Queensland, there would have been no coal industry and there would have been no aluminium industry, because they would not have built, as we did, a giant power station for which there were no customers in the belief that there would be if we built infrastructure. Most people in this House think of infrastructure as whirligigs and pleasure domes in the big cities. Heaven knows the Premier of Queensland is the king of all whirligigs and pleasure domes! He is the king of debt as well, because he increased the debt of the Brisbane City Council by 60 per cent and he increased their taxation by 60 per cent. We can drive through Brisbane and see all the bicycles he is responsible for. There are tens of thousands of bicycles that I have never seen anyone riding around on in my life. Is it any wonder that his party members are fleeing at the moment?

I also belonged to a government with very great pride in the fact that we never sacked any public servants. Yes, there was confrontation—a particular group of people switched the lights out in Brisbane. But except for that incident, which concerned 200 people, we never sacked anyone. On the railways, I am very proud to say because I had a railway electorate, in 1979 there were 22,000 people and in 1989 there were 21,000, even though we had instituted computerisation, which did away with 4,000 or 5,000 jobs in that period. We had the same number in 1979 that we had in 1989. But the great socialist party came in, and in seven years they took the numbers from 21,000 down to 12,000. They were not allowed up on the dais when 10,000 people marched in Brisbane. They were not allowed up on the dais because our trade union leaders are not hypocrites. They knew that they were the people who sacked half the railway workers in Queensland and broke the hearts of many people.

I conclude on this note: Anthea, a lovely lady who was one of our nurses, has no job now. I asked her, 'Can you get a job?' She said, 'No, I can't leave town because I owe money on my house.' I said, 'Can you get a job in town?' She said, 'There are no jobs for nurses in Charters Towers.' I asked, 'What will you do?' She did not have a tear in her eye and her voice did not waver. She said, 'I've got three children, Bob, and I don't know—I don't know.' (Time expired)

Ms LEY (Farrer) (21:07): I think it is important that the member for Melbourne acknowledge that both state and Commonwealth Labor governments have presided over drastic cuts to the public service. I know that he, like those opposite, would like people to believe that public sector job cuts are strictly the modus operandi of coalition governments. Yet Labor's own modelling projects 4,200 full-time jobs to be shed from the federal Public Service, with further modelling showing federal Labor will cut more than 12,000 employees by the end of 2014-15. We have seen around 4,000 jobs go already under various efficiency-dividend mandates.

Mr Katter interjecting—

Ms LEY: Even the Greens do not have immunity here. In Tasmania, the state Greens-ALP alliance is, similarly, shedding jobs, due to their grave mismanagement of the Tasmanian economy. They also appear to be a little confused as to how many jobs have actually been cut.

Mr Katter: There's a fair few going in your electorate—I was up there last week.
Ms LEY: The member for Kennedy talks about coming to my electorate; he has not bothered to come into this House to vote, on, I think, 120 occasions—perhaps that is the record you would like to take to the people of Farrer, member for Kennedy?

Mr Katter: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I claim to have been misrepresented. The member reflected upon me for not voting in this House. We do not vote on party political issues; we call them party games.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Symon): There is no point of order.

Ms LEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, if you would ask the member for Kennedy to please desist from his interjections on my speech, I will not remind him of his voting record in this parliament.

Mr Katter interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! It would be far better for everyone in the House that the member for Farrer be heard in silence, as is her right.

Ms LEY: I was referring to the mismanagement by Tasmanian Labor of the Tasmanian economy. Not only does it appear that the Tasmanian government is struggling with their basic maths, but the make-up of job losses is worthy of comment. Two-thirds came from essential services—health, police and education—with just three from the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Campbell Newman has been forced to take large cuts to the public sector directly as a result of the former Labor government. Under Anna Bligh, we saw economic mismanagement of debt to the tune of around $85 billion, once we factor in Labor commitments yet to be paid for. Yet it is important to note that those who are being made redundant will receive their full entitlements in nearly every single case. Public expenditure growth in Queensland has been well above the national average. As expert in public administration Ken Wiltshire pointed out in the Australian recently, there was:

… a blowout in the amount spent on public servants across the past decade, at 8.7 per cent a year. Of that, 3.5 per cent was attributed to the number of employees and 5.2 per cent to growth of wages.

This blow-out occurred entirely under Labor. So, while it is regrettable, there have been necessary cuts.

Queensland Health has somewhere in the vicinity of 80,000 staff today; 10 years ago it had 49,000. Yet the fact that almost three-quarters of the cuts are covered off by annual, natural attrition does not really give those opposite adequate ammunition for a suitable scare campaign. They would have you believe that there will be no-one left standing in the Queensland public service. In fact, so determined was Minister Shorten to prove his point that he felt it necessary to jump on a plane to Queensland to announce his commitment to standing by and protecting Queensland public servants. In fact, what he did was make it even harder for recently retrenched Queensland public servants to get a job. I do wonder whether recently redundant Canberra public servants are questioning why the federal minister felt it appropriate to do this when he kept silent on their redundancies, because they were the result of his own federal colleagues. He has also been noticeable for his absence in all instances where state Labor governments have undertaken public sector redundancies.

On the topic of protections for public sector employees, I say this: public sector staff across the board have high levels of protection in place. Their redundancy payouts are going to be paid. They are not going to be left hanging. And they can rest assured that their entitlements will be paid in
full. This motion will achieve nothing, barring tying up valuable time of the standing committee on the political whim of the member for Melbourne. Therefore, the coalition will not be supporting this motion. All this serves to do is to act as a distraction from the real issue—the abysmal economic management of various state and federal Labor governments and their own penchant for slashing public servants while appeasing their union mates.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (21:12): The public servants throughout our country deliver services to the Australian people. They are the best and brightest minds in this country. And those on the other side of this House do not value them in any shape or form.

In New South Wales in recent times, we have really learnt just what the Liberal Party thinks of public servants and public services. In New South Wales, Barry O’Farrell has cut $1.7 billion out of education. The member for Farrer spoke about the fine economic credentials of the Liberal Party throughout the country. What has come to the attention of the people of New South Wales is that the O’Farrell government made a mathematical error: instead of having a budget deficit they have a billion-dollar surplus. Regardless of this fact, they are still going to slash those jobs in education. And who does that affect? That affects the children. That affects this country. That affects our economic prosperity. If we do not have an educated workforce, if we do not have public servants, if we do not have teachers to deliver that education in our public system, then what we have is a second-class country. And that is what the Liberal Party has been demonstrating, in both this federal parliament and the states of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, they believe in. We have only to look at the statement of the shadow Treasurer in which he said that a Liberal-National Party government would slash 12,000 federal Public Service jobs to know that is what the opposition stand for. That is what the Liberal-National Party stand for. They stand for cutting jobs in the Public Service.

Along with that, they are cutting services to the Australian people. They should stand condemned for what has been happening in the states throughout Australia. In New South Wales and Queensland, I have heard—I am much more familiar with New South Wales—they are not only cutting jobs but attempting to strip leave loading for public servants, penalty rates for shift workers and the allowances of workers in remote areas. This will leave many thousands of workers worse off. But those on the other side of this parliament do not care about the fact that these are people who have families and who have financial obligations that they have to meet. All they care about are cuts, cuts, cuts. Along with cuts, cuts, cuts from the Public Service, there are cuts, cuts, cuts to services for the Australian people.

In New South Wales they have not just stopped with cutting jobs in the public service; they are also cutting workers compensation entitlements. They are ripping away workers’ entitlements to workers compensation. The O’Farrell government is taking away the rights of people who are injured at work to any compensation or any support whilst they are injured.

If you look at the Liberal Party, what do you see? You see a party that does not value workers, does not value the public sector and does not believe in delivering public services. You have a party that is all about one thing. It is all about the big end of town and, at the same time, ignoring the needs of the people of Australia and devaluing the services that are provided through the public
specially in New South Wales they stand condemned for their cuts to education— *(Time expired)*

**Mrs PRENTICE** (Ryan) (21:17): I rise to speak on the member for Melbourne's motion regarding public sector employees in the states of Australia. Along with every member of this House, I am concerned any time an Australian loses their job, whether it is in the private or the public sector. Employment is a cornerstone of one's life. Being productive in the workplace is how we support ourselves and our children; it is how we provide shelter and security.

I also want to ensure that every Australian has appropriate protections at work. As the motion today does not explicitly state, public service employees in every state except Victoria are covered under their own industrial relations powers. In effect, the member for Melbourne's motion is an attack on the notion of competitive federalism in this country and does not acknowledge that, where appropriate, it is up to the states to regulate their own affairs without an overbearing federal government.

What today's motion does do, however, is distract Australians from what has been the main cause of so many job losses and what has been hurting general employment conditions around Australia in the private and public sectors—and that is the Labor Party and Labor governments. After decades of Labor governments in some states, and after five years of a federal Labor government, Australia and the Australian economy are reeling from their poor and reckless financial management of the economy.

In only five years of Labor running the Commonwealth, $70 billion of net assets has now turned into $150 billion of net debt. The Treasurer has run the four biggest deficits in Australia's history, and this Labor government has overseen wasteful and damaging programs, including overpriced school halls and dangerous roof insulation. This Labor government has implemented the world's only economy-wide carbon tax and has introduced an overpriced and underdelivered NBN, both of which are costing Australians billions and billions of dollars every year.

If we look at Queensland, after almost 20 years of Labor government, Campbell Newman's LNP government inherited $65 billion of debt. The Newman government was elected by Queenslanders to return the Queensland budget to a state of fiscal sanity. As a result of the previous Labor government's reckless spending, the state's fiscal and economic situation was destitute—and the new LNP government has to deal with that.

Today's private member's motion from the member for Melbourne would be laudable if it were not for the usual silence that comes from the Greens and the Labor Party when jobs are cut by their own parties. I say 'usual silence' because we know that the Greens are extremely pleased whenever a single job is lost in the mining industry. We should never forget that this is the party, under Bob Brown and now Senator Milne, that actively wants to shut down the coal industry and to do it today, no matter the cost to Australians and their jobs. More importantly, we have in Australia a Labor minister for employment who remains silent when Labor governments or unions cut workers.

Despite the silence, there have been significant attempts across our country to manage the size of the public service. In Tasmania, the Labor-Greens government plans to slash 2,300 public service workers. The South Australian government recently announced that, as a result of budget pressures and the typical template of Labor
economic mismanagement, they are actually cutting 350 jobs from the public hospital system, which will see at least 114 beds lost. In total, the South Australia government plans to slash 1,400 public servants. At the federal level, Labor’s own modelling projects 4,200 full-time jobs will be cut from the federal Public Service, with the very real possibility that 12,000 employees will have lost their jobs by the end of 2014-15. Have we heard anything from the federal Labor minister about these cuts? Of course not.

The debate today comes down to one basic fact: the employment conditions and the employment numbers for Australians are best when the economy is performing well. The members of this House who will manage the economy well for all Australians stand on this side of the chamber. Only the coalition has the policies and experience to reset our country’s course to one that sees increasing confidence, renewed productivity growth and real improvement in the wealth of households. The next election will offer the Australian people a clear choice of three more years of Labor dysfunction and division or a new government with the experience and plans to deliver a strong and prosperous economy and a safe and secure Australia—indeed hope, reward and opportunity for all Australian workers.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (21:22): Slashing and burning, cutting and pillaging—that is the record of the Queensland LNP government, the New South Wales LNP government and the Victorian LNP government. This side of politics, the federal Labor government, has always supported the hardworking public servants in this country. There are about 1.8 million of them who serve this country well, from the Torres Strait to Tasmania, from Palm Beach right across to Perth.

At a federal level we know that those opposite have a proposal to cut 20,000 jobs from Commonwealth public sector. Why do we know that that is a promise they will fulfil? Because of the record of those opposite—Ted Baillieu, their mate, Campbell Newman, their comrade, and of course Barry O’Farrell, their friend. Their record in both states shows that quite clearly. In Queensland, my home state, Campbell Newman has cut over 14,000 full-time public sector jobs and there are another approximately 7,000 who work on contracts as well. These are people like teachers, nurses, community workers, domestic violence counsellors, people who work in child safety and disability services. He even proposes to get rid of people who work in Eventide, a state run aged care facility. Then there are the people in the rural fire brigades, those who work in regional councils, those who work in flood recovery community work and those who work in the drug courts and the Murri courts. Even the tenancy advocacy services were proposed to be slashed and we had to step in to save them.

Campbell Newman and the LNP state government in Queensland have betrayed the workers. He said that public sector workers had nothing to fear from him. That is what he said in April 2011. He betrayed the people who elected him. There are TAFE cuts on the go. There is a proposal to cut the number of TAFE campuses and educational institutions from 82 to 44, and Bremer TAFE in Ipswich, in my electorate, is under the gun as well.

Campbell Newman calls what he has done ‘revitalisation’. Those opposite claim that he is there to ‘clean up the mess’. The member for Ryan was in his political party, on his team, in the Brisbane City Council. What is the legacy Campbell Newman left to the Brisbane City Council? It is $2.4 billion in debt. They are figures that the Brisbane City...
Council budget records show. That is what he left to the Brisbane City Council. He got out leaving them with a terrible legacy and now he purports to come into the Queensland parliament to allegedly fix up Labor's debt.

That is what he claims, but he has betrayed even his own members. We have seen that in the last 24 hours. We have seen the member for Condamine, Ray Hopper, come out and say it and now he has decided to desert the ship. He has decided to actually stand up for his constituents. The LNP members opposite never stand up for their constituents in this place. They never stand up to Campbell Newman on behalf of Queensland; they always stand up for Campbell Newman. You can see them, one after another. In August this year we even saw former LNP life member Clive Palmer giving the Together union, which helps represent public sector workers in Queensland, $250,000 to create the Hope Fund to provide impacted former public sector employees with counselling and vocational training. Mr Palmer has become so disillusioned with the LNP government in Queensland he resigned his membership.

We have had to step in to help public sector workers in Queensland. The Queensland Council of Unions estimates that 900 jobs have been lost in my electorate. Indeed, the unemployment rate in Ipswich went up 0.6 per cent in a month at the height of the cuts from the Campbell Newman government. That is the impact they have had. On 24 October the federal Labor government staged a government jobs and information workshop at Ipswich. The LNP member for Ipswich claimed there were only a few people in Ipswich who had lost their jobs. Well, I was there at that workshop and there were dozens and dozens of public servants in Ipswich who had lost their jobs, right across the sector. I spoke to many of them. This was part of an $850,000 federal Labor government support package for the 14,000 affected public sector workers. We have run jobs and skills expos in Brisbane and Logan.

The reality is that coalition governments do not value the public sector. They do not value the services it provides. Look at what their attitude is. We have seen those opposite come out in support of what Campbell Newman has done in Queensland. The shadow Treasurer, Joe Hockey, the member for North Sydney, praised Campbell Newman's savage cuts, saying in the Age on 7 September 2012: 'All strength to his right arm. He's showing incredible courage'—sacking people. We have seen Campbell Newman—(Time expired)

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (21:27): This motion has two distinct parts. The first part of the motion deals with concerns about job losses in state governments around Australia and raises issues surrounding bargaining for wages and conditions in the public sector. The second part of the motion seeks a referral to the Standing Committee on Education and Employment for an inquiry into conditions of employment of state public sector employees, and I oppose that referral.

I find this motion extraordinary on a number of counts. As we are all well aware, not all states have opted to refer their industrial relations arrangements to the Commonwealth, and for some states there was only a partial referral. In Queensland and in New South Wales public sector employees are not covered by the Fair Work Act because successive Labor governments did not refer powers to the Commonwealth in respect of public sector employees and local government employees. Clearly, if federal Labor were to support this motion, it would be casting a vote of no confidence in
the former Labor state governments of New South Wales and Queensland.

That the member for Melbourne now thinks that intervention in this area of workplace law by the federal parliament is somehow desirable is quite clearly misconceived. It directly challenges the right of the states to determine their own employment affairs. It is appropriate that, unless there is a direct referral of powers, terms and conditions of employment for state public sector employees fall under the jurisdiction of the state industrial system. It is not for the federal parliament to inquire into the terms and conditions of employment of state public sector employees and there should be no referral to the Standing Committee on Education and Employment.

The motion also refers to the supposed difficulties that public sector employees face in bargaining over wages and conditions. I would say that is not the case. In many industry sectors, public sector awards are the pacesetters and private sector awards follow and are very in line with the public sector. The same occurs in collective bargaining negotiations: the public sector leads the way and the private sector negotiations follow. Some unions actively seek to finalise agreements with the public sector before negotiating with the private sector—

Debate interrupted.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The SPEAKER (21:30): Order! It being 9.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Sunland Group**

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (21:30): I rise tonight to put on the record details that have been left out of recent media reports in relation to the case surrounding two Australians on trial in Dubai and canvassed most recently in the *Weekend Australian*. As with every story, there are two sides, and I want to ensure that a local Gold Coast business, Sunland, with 30 years of experience as a solid Australian corporate citizen, is not tarnished by a media that has chosen to tell only half the story. In the story written by Cameron Stewart for the *Weekend Australian*, he states:

The bribery charges for which he—

Joyce—

was arrested in Dubai in 2009 were tested in the Victorian Supreme Court this year and found to be without foundation. … Sunland … was found by the Australian judge to have "commenced and continued the present proceedings in wilful disregard of known facts and law" and with "a willingness to implicate Joyce unjustifiably".

The case to which Cameron Stewart refers is currently being appealed by Sunland on the basis that Justice Croft failed to consider a substantial amount of documentary evidence, including evidence of Joyce and Reed planning to deceive Sunland, evidence of the falsification of documents by Joyce or Reed, and evidence of the distribution of half of the payment made by Sunland to Reed's company, approximately $7 million, from Reed to Joyce, who at the time was a senior public servant in Dubai.

The receipt of that $7 million by Joyce is the basis for the bribery charge Joyce faces in Dubai. However, that bribery charge was not tested in the Victorian Supreme Court. Although the evidence of the bribe, and documents from the Dubai investigation and the Dubai Court file, were put before the Victorian Supreme Court, Justice Croft refused to consider them and said they were irrelevant. In his 300-page judgement, Justice Croft made not one mention of the fact that Reed paid Joyce $7 million and that Joyce has been charged with bribery in Dubai for receiving that $7 million. Further, Cameron Stewart wrote:
Joyce is not alone. His former work colleague Marcus Lee, 43, was also arrested in 2009 on similar charges, despite Sunland having belatedly admitted this year that some of its claims against him, which formed the basis of his prosecution, were wrong.

The facts are that Mr Lee has been charged by the Dubai authorities because of his role in facilitating the transaction. The Dubai authorities assert that Lee deliberately undervalued the land in question in order to deliver a larger premium to Reed and Joyce. Lee's valuation provided a basis for Joyce to reduce the price. Sunland had no knowledge that Reed and Joyce knew one another until after Joyce was arrested. Sunland has made no comment on claims against Lee in Dubai. Sunland did correct minor facts—telephone numbers and dates—relating to Lee's dealings with Sunland, but those facts are not the basis of the Dubai prosecutor's claim against Lee. The most damning evidence is a Dubai audit report of 2009—never tested in Australia—that states:

Lee deliberately presented misleading and inaccurate information and omitted some data and studies which were necessary to determine the sale price …

This is from page 5 of a 2009 government of Dubai Financial Audit Department report.

According to the Weekend Australian:

Dubai authorities alleged that the $14 million payment by Sunland to a company called Prudentia, which was controlled by Joyce's colleague and fellow Geelong Grammar graduate Angus Reed, was an illegal commission. Sunland claimed it should not bear the blame for the payment because it was Joyce and Reed who helped facilitate it.

The facts are that the Dubai authorities never alleged that Sunland's payment to Prudentia was an illegal commission. Nor did the Dubai authorities seek to 'blame' Sunland for having made a payment to Reed. That was an assertion made by Joyce's and Reed's lawyers in the Victorian Supreme Court as part of a conspiracy theory put forward to damage Sunland, but it was contrary to the evidence in both the Victorian court and the Dubai court. The evidence of the bribe was uncovered by searches carried out of Joyce's home and office and of Joyce's Dubai lawyers' office and by other extensive investigations in Dubai.

It did not rely on any evidence from Sunland but rather the Dubai Financial Audit Department's report of April 2009 stated in relation to Joyce:

Joyce Has informed and directed Sunland that there are rights on plot no D17 in favour of some Australian individuals through a company called Prudential Investment, contrary to the true state of affairs.

He—

Joyce—

approved the business case determining the square foot sale price for 120 dirhams per square foot—

which is widely acknowledged to be 30 per cent lower than market value. It went on:

It is proved that the accused has received a commission of 6 million Australian dollars—

based on exchange rates at the time—

through his account with Standard Bank Jersey from the commission paid to the so-called Angus Reed amounting to about 12 million Australian dollars.

Again, this is from page 5 of the Financial Audit Department report.

The Weekend Australian article further states:

Even though Lee was not involved in negotiations over D17 he was caught up in the charges because he prepared a report in relation to the sale of the land at the request of his superiors. Two other Australian colleagues of Joyce who were not in Dubai at that time, Anthony Brearley and Reed, were also charged in relation to the D17 negotiations.
The facts are that Mr Lee prepared the business case on behalf of a company called Dubai Waterfront, including a valuation. Lee's superior who requested him to prepare the report was Joyce. Anthony Brearley was an in-house lawyer at Dubai Waterfront. I have more. I seek leave to table a document in relation to the issue.

Ms King: I am a little reluctant to grant leave, as it appears to be a legal matter that I do not have any information about.

Leave not granted.

Banks Electorate: Education

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (21:35): I rise tonight to place on the public record the views of the electors of Banks in a matter that affects all of us. In July this year, I distributed a survey asking my constituents their views on education. Overwhelmingly, they said that quality teaching was their No. 1 priority. They also saw trades training and vocational education streams as a very important part of the learning process for our children. They stated their concern about resources and assistance for students with disabilities.

In October, I outlined for my constituents the massive investment that this government has made in education in Banks—an unprecedented figure. Madam Speaker, you can see the map of Banks, with the schools noted on it. Since 2007, the government has invested just under $89 million in the local schools in Banks, across a range of programs—and I know that is repeated in every electorate across the country. The programs are: National School Pride; Primary Schools for the 21st Century; Science and Language Learning Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools; integration of information and communication technology; Solar Schools Program; and National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program. In addition, over 5,000 computers have been provided to local schools. There can be no doubt that this Labor government is committed to the future of our children through education and, more than that, prepared to fund that future through investment.

With my constituents, I was dismayed by the O'Farrell government announcement that education funding in New South Wales would be reduced. I received a number of phone calls and emails about the matter, as well as hearing firsthand from people as I moved around the electorate. I then decided to gauge that concern. Consequently, I sent out a petition to the majority of my electorate, printed it in my newsletter and also put the petition on my website. In my 22 years experience, the results have been, to say the least, overwhelming. The Holsworthy airport petition, when the then Howard government was proposing to build an airport at Holsworthy, was another one that was overwhelming. These are the petitions that I have received to date, and they are still coming in.

Mr Ruddock: I thought they were your Christmas cards!

Mr MELHAM: My Christmas cards are much fewer than that, I can tell the honourable member opposite. I seem to have fewer and fewer friends these days, as I get grumpier and grumpier! But here, Speaker, are the responses to date. They are the genuine thoughts of people in the electorate. Honourable members know how hard it is to get members of the community to respond in instances like this, so the O'Farrell government needs to take a check on this. The people of the Banks electorate are not happy with its state government.

What is the cost to our schools of this slash-and-burn approach from the New South Wales government? Potentially it is the loss of over 1,300 teachers, 2,500
Monday, 26 November 2012    HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES    13249

teachers aides, 128,000 teacher professional development days, 116,000 computers for schools—and the list goes on. This is totally unacceptable.

Then the New South Wales government, which was bleating about its poor budget position, was found by the New South Wales Auditor-General to have made budget errors. Total revenues were close to $600 million higher and total expenses were over $400 million lower than forecast. I have been here for 22½ years. The honourable member opposite, who is the father of the House, has been here much longer than that. I am sure he has not seen a billion-dollar error in budget figures that has been exposed in such a short time.

Those figures were used to justify the cuts, particularly to education. Those cuts are no longer warranted, given that the Auditor-General, someone in effect within the government process, has exposed it. An expected deficit of $337 million in the middle of June became a surplus of $680 million by the end of June. The O'Farrell government needs to reverse its disastrous decision to slash $1.7 billion from the education budget in New South Wales. We should be investing more money in our schools, not less. If we want students to have a great education and be able to get a great job when they leave school, more investment is required. The New South Wales Liberals need to admit their mistake, end the cuts and sign up to our plan for better schools.

Stirling Electorate: 2012 Members of Parliament National Volunteer Awards

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (21:37): The 2012 Members of Parliament National Volunteer Awards have given me the opportunity to recognise the outstanding contribution that many Stirling residents have made to our local community through various forms of volunteering.

This year it was my honour to award the MP national volunteer award to Pat Luca. I have known Pat for many years in my capacity as the federal member for Stirling and am grateful to have the opportunity to recognise the extraordinary contribution that Pat has made to the Stirling community. Pat has always been an advocate for keeping young people off the streets and making them proactive members of the Stirling community. As the President of the Balcatta Soccer Club and a prominent member of the Western Australian Italian Club, Pat has utilised this network to help fundraise for many local campaigns. One example was after the tragic death of the 17-year-old Balcatta Soccer Club player Luke Beyer, who was killed in a car accident by a drunk driver. Pat helped to establish a foundation to create awareness of the dangers of drink-driving and also organised fundraising events to raise money for the Beyer family. Pat has also been instrumental in providing used uniforms and sporting equipment from the Balcatta Soccer Club to children at an orphanage in El Salvador. Pat is also very passionate about encouraging young women to get involved in sport and has successfully established many women's teams at the Balcatta Soccer Club. These are just a few of the examples of Pat's generosity and dedication to helping others in the Stirling community, and he is a very deserving recipient of this award.

Mr Conrad Liveris, of Carine, is the winner of the Young Volunteer Award for his work with a variety of community, government, commercial and not-for-profit organisations. Conrad does volunteer work for the Left Right Think-Tank, the Student Association of the University of Notre Dame Australia, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition and Street Smugglers and has
previously been involved with over 15 different community organisations. With his brother and friends, Conrad founded Street Smugglers, an organisation that seeks to engage young people in combating homelessness in Perth. As the Chief Policy Officer of the Left Right Think-Tank, Conrad is responsible for overseeing more than 50 volunteers around Australia, as well as directing policy creation, national strategy and advocacy plans for state teams.

This year's Senior Volunteer Award went to Mr Anthony Fowke, of Karrinyup, for his tireless advocacy for mental health carers in our community. A solicitor by profession, Tony has used these skills to raise awareness of mental illness on a local, national and international level over several decades. Over the years, Tony has also been a member of many committees and boards that champion the cause of mental health carers, including being President of the World Federation for Mental Health and a member of the Western Australian Mental Health Review Board. As a result of Tony's tireless efforts, carers and families are now seen as pivotal stakeholders in the treatment of loved ones, and he has helped to reduce the stigma often associated with mental illness in the wider community.

Ms Phylis Robertson, of Balga, is the recipient of the Environment Volunteer Award for her ongoing work championing a wide range of local environmental causes. Phylis has volunteered for many different environmental organisations over the years, including the Balga Action Group, the Perth Zoo, the Rottnest Island tourism guides, the WA Herbarium and the royal agricultural show, to name only a few. Phylis is also an honorary member of the WA Gould League, a member of the North Suburban Historical Society and Honorary Curator of the Mount Flora Regional Museum. Her aim has always been to help other members of our community to see the environment as a valuable asset that must be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

It was my pleasure to award a Long-term Commitment to Community Service Award to Mrs Dianne Buckles, of Dianella. Dianne is a long-serving Red Cross volunteer and has been an active team member of the emergency services team for more than seven years. In this role, Dianne manned the phones during the tsunami crisis and volunteered during the Victorian bushfires, the equine disaster in Queensland, the Margaret River bushfires and the Lebanon evacuation. In addition to this, Dianne is also a volunteer for the migration support team.

Another worthy recipient of the Long Term Commitment to Community Service Award is Ms Prue Sheldrick of Mosman Park. For the last 20 years, Prue has raised in excess of $50,000 for the Leukaemia Foundation patient care program. On top of this, Prue has renovated four bedsit units, including new kitchens, flooring and painting, giving regional patients a warm place to call home whilst they undergo treatment in Perth. Prue also organised for a backyard makeover for the external area of each of these units, which was carried out by Bunnings team members.

All the winners need to be congratulated for their tireless efforts of giving back to our community and making a real difference to people's lives, particularly the lives of people around them. Our community relies heavily on the contribution of volunteers and I congratulate all of the recipients as being very worthy. (Time expired)

New South Wales Government: Education

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (21:45): It has been two months since the New South Wales Liberal government decided to slash funding to education by $1.7 billion. This decision
will leave government, private and Catholic schools in a very precarious position, with some having no choice other than to cut jobs, raise fees and compromise on class sizes.

Ordinary people in our communities across the state, including my local community of Fowler, are standing up on behalf of our young generations. They know that education is paramount. I have had an enormous response to a petition calling on the O'Farrell government to overturn its decision, with 1,500 local residents having voiced their concern to me via the petition and many more having joined the campaign in other ways.

Besides primary and high schools being directly affected by the New South Wales government's decision, our TAFE colleges are also at great risk as a result of these funding cuts. As part of this brutal education cost-cutting, 800 TAFE jobs will go over the next four years. Positions held by highly qualified and dedicated teachers will be either lost or replaced with cheaper options. Student fees will increase by 9½ per cent and student concession fees will almost double. As demonstrated in Queensland and Victoria, severe cuts in TAFE funding are likely to cause campuses to close and entire courses to be shut down, with many others being handed over to private providers.

Comparing this with the federal Labor government's $2.3 billion investment into the New South Wales training system, the difference between our two parties is apparent. Many TAFE students, particularly in south-west Sydney, come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Studying at TAFE often provides them with the knowledge and training necessary to become independent and break the cycle of poverty and unemployment.

While mainstream courses will certainly suffer as result of the cuts, programs catering to students with special needs are particularly vulnerable. The TAFE Outreach program, including the Liverpool TAFE program I recently visited, will now be delivered through other faculties, breaking the formula that has worked successfully for over 30 years. Last year the unit had close to 500 successful completions out of the 684 enrolments, and many students expressed their gratitude for being able to start their studies at the speed and level they were able to cope with. I have received enormous numbers of letters from students who studied in the Outreach program. One student stated that his dyslexia made it hard for him learn at the regular speed and that Outreach was the perfect opportunity for him to gain the knowledge, strength and confidence to consider further studies.

Special programs provided by Miller TAFE will inevitably suffer a similar or worse fate, being one of the first programs to be sacrificed as a result of the funding cuts. I recently visited Miller TAFE College to discuss the implications of the funding cuts on the teachers and students. I spoke to Grant Cameron, coordinator of the basic adult education disability support program. He shared my view on the importance of programs catering to students with special needs, particularly when it came to students with mental health issues. Grant is very passionate about his job and one of his main goals, as he told me, is to help students to get off welfare and secure a job.

Courses under the special program were once provided free; however, since the budget cuts students have been required to pay full fees for these courses. I toured the Miller campus with Phil Chadwick, President of the TAFE Teachers Association. We used the opportunity to observe some of the classes, including carpentry, metal framework, special programs including English for speakers of other languages, and
basic adult education. I also attended a barbecue organised by the student association, where the students spoke of their experiences at TAFE and concerns over the funding cuts. TAFE education is universally recognised and respected. TAFE has, for years, been at the forefront when it comes to giving people in New South Wales the skills they need to fill the jobs of the future.

These funding cuts threaten the quality of future workers who come through the TAFE system. This is something the state of New South Wales, with an increased demand for a highly skilled workforce, cannot afford. I support the call of the community— (Time expired)

Lebanon

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (21:50): Today is the national day of Lebanon. Sixty-nine years ago modern Lebanon was established. I had the great privilege of attending an event this evening with some colleagues at which that day was noted. In October I also had the privilege of participating in a trade mission to Lebanon. It was sponsored by the Australian Lebanon Chamber of Commerce & Industry, a relatively newly formed organisation but one which is very much attuned with the importance of developing an ongoing relationship between Australia and Lebanon, particularly through trade. In its objectives it says that it is about the promotion of two-way trade and investment between Australia and Lebanon, including but not limited to the export and import of goods and services, raw materials, farm commodities, manufactured products, tourism, education, professional services, and intellectual property and expertise; assisting the trade and investment activities of bilateral chambers; fostering an understanding of Lebanese culture and business practices within the Lebanese business community.

This organisation has been ably led by a very prominent Victorian, a gentleman by the name of Faddy Zouky OAM. The honorary president is Louis Fleyfel OAM and a large number of other prominent business people are members of its board. The delegation, of which I formed part and in which many business people participated, was led by the governor of your state, Madam Speaker. It was a very full range of activities in which the delegation was involved. They met all day with the Chamber of Commerce in Industry and Agriculture for Beirut and Mount Lebanon. They met with the Lebanese International Business Council. They were also able to meet with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Agriculture of Tripoli. They had the opportunity of meeting with the Trade Minister, Mr Sabounjian. They also had the privilege—and I participated in this—of meeting with His Excellency General Michel Sleiman, the President of Lebanon. As I say, Alex Chernov, your governor, was with us. The delegation was also ably assisted by the Australian ambassador, Lex Bartlem.

I had the opportunity while I was there of visiting the Bekaa Valley and Zahlé. I spoke with the former Melkite Bishop of Australia, now the Bishop of Zahlé. I had the opportunity of also visiting North Lebanon. I was hosted in the town of Miziara. I was also able to go to the city of Byblos and there I was awarded the key of the city by the mayor of Byblos. This delegation was a great tribute to the effort and work of Mr Faddy Zouky. Tragically, during the time that the delegation was away, his father passed away. He remained to ensure that the organisation of the trade mission proceeded and then returned to the funeral of his father here in Australia. I think he put Australia first at a very difficult time.
It is with a great deal of personal delight that I have accepted becoming a patron of the Australia Lebanon Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I am pleased to be able to report that Mr Faddy Zouky was very excited by the headway made by the delegation and has reported very favourably on a large number of proposals by Lebanese organisations to have exchange programs with Australia. I was pleased to open up my Weekend Australian on the weekend of 10 November to read that Faddy Zouky of Zouky Brothers had received an award in the Ethnic Business Awards program for establishing a very successful business in Australia, employing now some 6,000 Australians—a remarkable Australian, a remarkable journey and very worthy of commendation.

Not long after retiring, Rod began a weekly class for the University of the Third Age, or U3A, on the history of musical theatre. From small beginnings, it has developed into a large group with a strong support team and about 120 members. Rod's aim is not just to entertain but to educate members on the background of the shows that they watch. Through group bookings, he has also developed a strong rapport with amateur theatre companies, thus helping to provide support and encouragement to local talent. A long stint as volunteer presenter on community radio and a prominent role in the purchase and upgrading of U3A's audio-visual equipment have added to Rod Templar's accomplishments. His interests, generosity and professional and technical skills—as well as his infectious enthusiasm—have made him an exceptional member of the ACT community and most definitely a Canberra legend.

Another Canberra legend is Gwyneth George. Some of you may be familiar with Gwyneth's son, Peter George, a well-known ABC personality. Gwyneth is now in her mid-80s but her legacy is important to recognise. Gwyneth has won community service awards and she is one of the wonderful legends who have dedicated their lives to helping others and building a better community. Gwyneth set up a group called Spiral in 1970 with the help of many other outstanding volunteers in Canberra. Spiral is now celebrating over 40 years of supporting and entertaining some of Canberra's older citizens. Spiral is a group of about 10 volunteers, most of whom are now in their 70s and 80s. They have about 30 members, mainly women aged between 65 and 95.

These volunteers meet at the St James Uniting Church in Curtin. It is a beautiful part of my electorate. It is a non-denominational group of volunteers who meet every week. They provide food,
refreshments and some form of entertainment. Usually, there is a special guest speaker; sometimes there may be a musical performance; and occasionally they go for picnics.

I am proud to have in my electorate so many dedicated and passionate volunteers who help our older citizens and I encourage more people to join groups like Spiral and others who provide much needed services and entertainment to make other people's lives so much better.

Finally, I want to acknowledge Jess McConnell, a young leader in the Canberra community. Through her involvement with Scouting, St John Ambulance, Limelight and various community theatre productions, Jess has held a variety of leadership positions and completed thousands of volunteer hours. Jess was a major driving force behind the Scouts ACT Solomon Islands 2011 project, which is a fully youth-run leadership program. Here, young Rovers aged between 18 and 25 utilised skills gained through Scouts to implement a socially-worthwhile, community based project.

Jess has also completed her senior and advanced first aid certificates, and she has completed hundreds of hours of public first aid duties for Canberra region events such as local shows, football matches, fêtes, Anzac Day and other community events. Incredibly for such a young person, Jess has participated in the world jamboree, and she went to Switzerland on a school exchange. Jess McConnell is a Canberra legend whose support of her community and voluntary work with children with disabilities and terminally ill children deserves to be widely recognised.

I end my speech in this adjournment debate on a very positive note by speaking about the Rotax Pro Tour go-karting championship I attended just recently in Canberra. Tyra Maranik, who was a competitor in the event, wrote to me:

Dear Ms Brodtmann,

… thank you for coming to the Pro Tour event at Canberra. I know someone in your position is very busy, so I appreciate the time he spent with us.

You spoke to me on the grid, before the final. I had a great Saturday, coming 4th in the heats.

(Time expired)

Volunteering

Mrs Andrews (McPherson) (22:01): I have spoken on a number of occasions about volunteering and do so again tonight because volunteering is so important to our communities. Volunteers are the essence of what makes this country great. We have seen throughout our history the good-natured spirit of Australians and their will to make the local community better for everyone. Australia in many ways defines itself on the basis of a spirit of selflessness, and the world has come to know us for our willingness to always lend a hand.

In 2010 over 6.1 million Australians, 36 per cent of the population, did volunteer work. This is a huge proportion of our population and exemplifies the generous spirit that our country prides itself upon. We need to do all that we can in this place to foster this spirit and make the number of volunteers grow. Our volunteers provide assistance to many people through a wide range of community organisations such as Lions, Probus, Rotary, Toastmasters, Neighbourhood Watch, church groups, surf lifesaving clubs, sporting groups, volunteer fire brigades and many more. Without a group of dedicated volunteers, none of these organisations would exist.

On the Gold Coast alone, 15 per cent of residents reported that they had engaged in some form of voluntary work, and between 2006 and 2011 the number of volunteers on
the Gold Coast increased by over 11,400. The hard work, the passion and enthusiasm shown by volunteers is what drives our community organisations, and we should all give thanks for the many long hours they give so willingly to get the job done. The lasting social and cultural benefits that the community volunteer organisations scattered across the country have provided are incalculable. The vibrant and diverse nation that we are part of today is testimony to these benefits. However, I believe that the economic benefits of community organisations and volunteers have been overlooked, and tonight I will briefly highlight the benefits provided by volunteers.

In 2006 it was calculated that the value of the unpaid work provided by Australian volunteers equated to roughly $14.6 billion. This is reflective of all the long hours worked by volunteers, who get no pay except for the satisfaction of having made a difference to their community. There are also a number of economically significant not-for-profit organisations, which contributed just under $43 billion to Australia's gross domestic product in 2006-07. This is also a wonderful result and shows how critical the not-for-profit sector is to our national economy. These numbers exemplify the high value of our volunteers and the not-for-profit sector. Without their hard work, there would be a variety of services that would go undone or otherwise incur a cost on the taxpayer if these services had to be provided by government. I highlight one example of such services tonight.

Many in this place will know that, sometimes, established community groups find it hard to attract, train and retain members. In an effort to address this issue, Volunteering Gold Coast, a not-for-profit group, offers a range of services to its over 300 member organisations on the Gold Coast, which include services such as supporting volunteer management, education and training, referrals, recruitment and events and transport services. In addition, Volunteering Gold Coast currently provides over 3,500 volunteers to not-for-profit groups throughout the city and runs a fleet of 34 vehicles across the city to help provide those in need with a cheap and reliable method of transport so that they can get where they need to go.

I am proud to have an organisation such as Volunteering Gold Coast working within my electorate, and I note that it is the largest volunteer resource centre of its kind in Australia. If an organisation such as Volunteering Gold Coast did not provide the services it does, it would be left up to government to do so; or perhaps these services would fall by the wayside. The consequence would be that the organisations which Volunteering Gold Coast assists would be left without vital support and, possibly, would need to scale back their services themselves.

Volunteering Gold Coast is a prime example of how community groups benefit the wider community, and I hope that in all the deliberations of this House we remember the social, economic and cultural benefits of volunteers and community organisations and that we do what we can to foster the community spirit that has been a core part of our national character.

**Bass Electorate: Innovation**

Mr LYONS (Bass) (22:06): I stand in the House today to once again highlight some of the great innovations in Bass. I am proud to say that the Gillard Labor government is supporting innovation in my state. We have done this by investing in our young people with the Building the Education Revolution, by rolling out the National Broadband Network, by supporting businesses and the
arts and by investing heavily in irrigation schemes to revive our agricultural sector.

In an insert titled 'Island of inspiration: celebrating the individuals and organisations inspiring the Tasmania of today and tomorrow', which was distributed recently in Tasmania in the Examiner newspaper, Professor Jonathan West proclaimed, 'The key to innovation and prosperity in Tasmania lies in our natural resources, water, sunshine and land.' I could not agree more. People like Professor West see the great opportunities our state has to offer. The Examiner's Island of Inspiration supplement contained 68 pages of positive stories about inspiring Tasmanians achieving amazing things in their sector. This included articles on shipping simulators, on-road disability mobility scooters, innovations in aquaculture, agriculture, innovative website creators and much more. These businesses are harnessing the opportunities available to them, thinking outside the square to provide something a bit different to what else is already on the market.

The Gillard government is very committed to ensuring Australia's economy meets the challenges of the future and delivers prosperity for all Australians. Investing in economic infrastructure and improving the productivity and competitiveness of our industries will secure our economic future. We are working side by side with Australian industries to boost their productivity and competitiveness, and to build a culture of innovation.

In the 21st century, telecommunications has become an essential utility, like electricity or water. Australian families rely on it and Australian businesses need it. Without world-class broadband, Australia will fall behind the rest of the world, and our economy will suffer. Our businesses will not have the tools they need to compete with businesses around the world. The great challenge for Australia is to harness the wealth from the current resources boom to improve our productivity and diversify our economy. That is precisely why the Gillard government is investing in the NBN.

We need the NBN in Tasmania to secure our economic future. The NBN will launch a new wave of digital innovation that will change the way Australians live, do business, receive services and connect with the world. The NBN gives businesses unprecedented opportunities to connect, via high-speed broadband, to distant markets both in Australia and overseas. It means businesses will be able to work from anywhere. High download and upload speeds mean you can run bandwidth-hungry applications like high-definition videoconferencing and large file transfers, which at the moment are just a pipedream for regional businesses. That means more jobs outside our capital cities. The NBN will finally give our regions the ability to decentralise our economic and population bases.

For Australians who live and work outside our capital cities, hours of travelling can be avoided by getting online with the NBN. Tele-health services provided over the NBN can allow you to see a medical specialist from your local doctor's surgery or your home. Educational services online will mean your kids will have access to a world-class education, even if your family lives in the bush. It is truly fantastic to see it.

Tasmania will be the first Australian state to be fully covered by the NBN. Our state will be fully rolled out by the end of 2015, a full five years ahead of any other state. We have many innovative people in Tasmania who are seizing this opportunity. Ros Harvey, director of the SenseT project, which has been backed by the federal government and the Tasmanian state...
government, has said that the NBN is crucial to the work they are doing. Autech is another example of a Tasmanian company creating waves through innovation. Managing Director, Darren Alexander, is a key advocate of the NBN. Managing director of Pivot Maritime, Jeff Hawkins, an Australian Exporter of the Year, has said ‘Tasmania is an ideas island.’ I agree with him wholeheartedly, and I will continue to do all I can to support those in the community who make Tasmania a great place to live.

Cook Electorate: Cook Community Classic

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (22:11): Five years ago the Cook Community Classic, which I am proud to serve as ongoing patron, was born. The combined surf carnival and community fair at Cronulla Beach and Park is not only a great family event but also it gives local partner charities a platform for fundraising and raising awareness in our community. Indeed, many local charities in the shire have come to rely on the classic as their primary fundraising vehicle and the success of the concept is revealed in the many new charities and community organisations that have signed on, including local parents and citizens groups from local schools.

Since its fledgling first steps at North Cronulla in 2008 the classic has become a firm fixture on the shire calendar. Thousands of families have enjoyed a great day out at the combined surf carnival and community fair. Together over the last five years, and with the strong support of our local Bate Bay surf clubs and the Cronulla Southern District Surf Life Saving Council, who are partners in this event, we have raised almost $300,000 net to support our local charities and local community organisations. This is a figure of which we are very proud. It is a great tribute to the community spirit of those who live in the shire and the shire community, where helping one's neighbour is not a slogan; it is a way of life.

The 2012 classic was another great success. Blessed with perfect weather last Sunday week, crowds flocked down to Cronulla Beach and Park to enjoy the family atmosphere of the community fair and beach events. This year's event began with the 2012 Cook Classic Pollie Paddle, which was held on the waters of beautiful Port Hacking, in September. In less than ideal conditions I was joined by the honourable member for Barton and the member for Hughes in battling the swell to raise around $20,000 in cash and donations for the Sylvanvale Foundation. I extend my gratitude particularly to the members for Barton and Hughes for their support.

This is just the second year of the beach soccer tournament. It attracted 15 teams from as far away as the South Coast, with Wollongong Beach Soccer Club taking out the $500 first prize. The one-kilometre and two-kilometre swims saw increased participation, with close to 200 swimmers taking part. The battle on the beach between our four Bate Bay surf life saving clubs in a series of board, running and swim relays was hard fought and ended with North Cronulla taking out the Bill Singleton Trophy, ahead of Cronulla. It was great to see that the clubs battled it out this year amongst their local nippers, rather than the senior clubs. It was great to have all the parents and families joining in what was a great day of competition.

It was my privilege to present the trophy to the North Cronulla team. I was also humbled by the presentation the Bate Bay clubs made to me to celebrate the classic's fifth anniversary. I particularly want to thank the club presidents—Anita Pryke, from Wanda; Rob Short, from Cronulla; Peter

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CHAMBER
Carney, Elouera; and Brian Ferguson, representing North Cronulla, who is a former president of the club and has been with the Cook Community Classic since its foundation—for their great support. I also want to thank Julie Adams, who has worked incredibly hard with me and with everybody who has been involved in establishing the event and making sure that it is the success it is today. She has done a tremendous job.

Our Bate Bay surf clubs selflessly host the classic every year. It is a demonstration not only of the deep commitment they have in protecting us on our beaches every summer but also of the wider support they provide to the shire community. Our charity partners this year included Jacaranda Cottage, the Lions Club of Sutherland Shire, the Parkinson's Support Group, the Endeavour Seniors Computer Club, the Australian Mitochondrial Disease Foundation, Solace and the St George & Sutherland Community College. They will all share in the significant benefits of the classic's fundraising vehicle to support their ongoing efforts to make the shire an even better place to live and raise a family.

The Cook classic has not only proved to be a great event to raise funds and awareness for the community organisations that support us all year round; it is also another great celebration of our great shire community. Thanks to everyone who came down this year to soak up the fantastic family atmosphere or who took part in the surf club carnival, the beach soccer or the community swims. I thank the supporters of the event, without whom it would not be possible, particularly IMB—it is known as the IMB Cook Community Classic—as well as the new sponsors, the Olsens Foundation and the St George & Sutherland Shire Leader. I also want to thank Qantas, who have been the mainstay of the raffle, for which in excess of 20,000 tickets are sold within the shire every single year.

We have come a long way in five years. With the continued support of our Bate Bay surf clubs, our generous sponsors and the backing of our shire community, the benefits of this wonderful community event will be felt for many years to come. In the spirit of this, we also look forward to the Cook Community Awards this Saturday, at which we will be honouring the selfless service of those heroes who form part of the many great community organisations in the shire.

Queensland Government

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (22:16): I know I look incredibly young, but I actually grew up in a Queensland which had Joh Bjelke-Petersen as Premier. He was Premier for most of my early years. One of my earliest memories, from grade 7, is of being selected by the nuns to give a speech to Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen at the local Catholic school, St Patrick's and St Joseph's.

My early experiences growing up in the country were National Party, National Party, National Party. The Queensland government that I knew had always been National Party. Growing up in country Queensland, I saw a few things but nothing like what people down in Brisbane experienced—Special Branch, demonstrations, people being carted off and all that sort of stuff. Later, I came to the music of that time—bands like The Saints—which was a response to those tough times in Queensland and some of the repression occurring at the time. It was not until I went on to teachers college in 1983 that I saw the SEQEB strikes and how the Queensland government under Premier Bjelke-Petersen dealt with dissent. I had thought that there was one voice, but I discovered that there were many voices and that some were being quashed. I remember the antimarching laws in particular. One of
my proudest political moments was being at the University of Queensland when they attempted to give Premier Bjelke-Petersen an honorary doctorate. I remember the poet Judith Wright sending in her degree so it could be set on fire in front of the crowd. She did not want a degree from a university that would recognise Premier Bjelke-Petersen.

But then, not long after that, we had Premier Wayne Goss, a progressive Labor leader. After *The Moonlight State* investigations and all the shame and drama, with ministers being sent to jail and corruption being exposed, the Queensland I had grown up in and become a teacher in became a much more progressive state. One of my local branch members, the Hon. Matt Foley, the Attorney-General at the time, personified some of those changes. He made a point of putting women on the bench—a radical idea in the Queensland I grew up in. We saw so many progressive ideas. Then, for a few years, we went back to the National Party under Premier Borbidge. Even though he was from the Gold Coast, he was a much more progressive member of the National Party. We moved on from there to Premier Beattie, who suggested that, rather than just being the sunshine state, we had to have something other than tourism and mining. He said, 'Let us be the smart state,' and he invested in biotechnology and coal seam gas.

Then we went on to Premier Bligh, a progressive left-leaning woman—she was almost my local member. That government did see one minister go to jail—someone who was corrupt and exposed as such. After having been in this chamber for five years, I can say this: I am yet to find greedy people in this chamber, either on this side of it or the other. Most people come here not because they are greedy but because there are selfless and want to serve people. I see people in the chamber who have made those decisions—they could have made more money but instead came here to serve.

Mr Frydenberg: Thanks, Craig!

Mr Perrett: I will take that interjection. This year I was on Sky TV during the March landslide. The Labor Party was consigned to the dustbin that election night, with only seven Labor MPs returned. It was a tough night to be on TV. I clearly remember what Clive Palmer said about Premier Newman and how it was going to be a grand new tradition. He is of course no longer a member of the Liberal National Party—only six or seven months later.

I remember the first statement from the Deputy Premier was, 'We want the Great Barrier Reef to be smaller.' I thought, 'Hello, this could be a problem.' But I thought that maybe that was just a one-off from Deputy Premier Seeney. Then we get the jobs for the boys—Caltabiano appointed to the transport department—we get the nepotism; we get the redefining of 'front-line', even for nurses and BreastScreen Queensland people; we get hard-fought, negotiated workplace agreements torn up; we get 14,000 people sacked; and we get 26,000 people losing their jobs. It is unbelievable. My message tonight is that I am starting a new campaign to say to Premier Newman: 'I want my state back. I do not want to go back to the Queensland I grew up in. That was a different time. Put those white shoes away.' I respect the democratic process but I can make a comment about the direction of my state. Give me my state back, Premier Newman. *(Time expired)*

Gillard Government

Mr Frydenberg (Kooyong) (22:21): It was John Kenneth Galbraith who once said 'Nothing is so admirable in politics as a short memory.' This may be all well and good for the politician who has committed the original sin but for the public who bear the brunt of
that politician's bad policy there is little forgiveness. And there is no worse government than what we have seen over the last five years, or 1,827 days, of the Rudd-Gillard government.

Let us recount just some of Labor's greatest failures over the last five years. I am sure there are many to add but here it goes. We have the carbon tax from a Prime Minister who said there would be no carbon tax under the government she led and a PM who promised a citizens assembly to generate a consensus and said she was from a party of 'truth telling'; the mining tax, which was first announced with no industry consultation and then introduced with so much industry consultation it produced zero revenue; the company tax cut, which was never delivered and saw Labor members like the Minister for Small Business and the member for Deakin write to their constituents the day before the announcement saying the company tax would be delivered; and the Henry tax review report which sat in the Treasurer's cupboard for six months before he released it, only to announce he was only going to accept one out of 138 recommendations—no surprise from a government that conducts itself by review, setting up more than 200 inquiries and reviews, the daddy of them all being the 2020 Summit.

Then there is the 2012-13 surplus that was a rolled-gold guarantee, then a commitment, then an objective, then a guiding principle, now an expectation that will never be delivered; the four biggest budget deficits in Australia's history; a net debt of $147 billion with an interest bill of $20 million a day and a debt ceiling of $300 billion from a starting position of having $70 billion in the bank and a debt ceiling of only $75 billion; an NBN which started at just over a $4 billion commitment, that had no cost-benefit analysis, the proposal for which was prepared by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy on the back of an envelope, has now blown out to $50 billion and has more than 1,300 staff and only 7,000 customers; and a bungled Australia Network tender which led to a police investigation and the government being forced to make compensation payments.

There has been government waste on a grand scale, from the pink batts that led to hundreds of house fires to the overpriced school halls, the set top boxes that were cheaper at Gerry Harvey's and the $70 million being spent on government advertising to sell a carbon tax no one wants; the embarrassing, costly and public failures of the green loans, GroceryWatch, Fuel watch and clash for clunkers; the bloating of the Public Service, which has seen more than 20,000 new hires on Labor's watch; and the abolition of anything and everything that Tony Abbott was responsible for when a minister in the Howard government from the successful Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, work for the dole, the private health insurance rebate and of course the Australian building and construction commission—not to mention the blank cheque that has been given to the unions, with amendments to fair work provisions, the stacking of the commission with political appointments and wilful blindness towards union militancy in the workplace.

There is the introduction of more than 20,000 new or amended regulations with only 104 repealed, strangling small business in a sea of red tape and burdensome regulation; the failure to protect our borders with more than 30,000 unauthorised arrivals and 500 boats with hundreds of lives tragically lost at sea, riots in our detention centres and a budget blowout of more than $6 billion, not to mention the farce of the East Timor solution the Timorese
government did not want and the Malaysia solution the High Court would not allow; the dramatic and dangerous cuts to defence spending, which has fallen to the lowest level since 1938; and the misdirection of our aid spending that has seen Australian taxpayers funding a statue in New York that commemorates the end of slavery in the Caribbean.

We also have the farce of the live cattle export issue which cost millions of dollars and thousands of jobs; the dumbing down of our foreign policy by our Prime Minister, who would rather be sitting with a class of schoolkids than representing the country meeting fellow world leaders abroad; an Asia Pacific Community that never got off the ground but only damaged our relationships in the region; the leaking of a private telephone conversation with President Bush over the G20; calling the Chinese rat somethings; and the bypassing of a trusted partner in Japan on Mr Rudd's first visit overseas. The current Foreign Minister Senator Carr has also launched into Papua New Guinea, calling for sanctions against them. If that is what a rehearsed kabuki actor behaves like, then save us all.

The list goes on: the backflip and embarrassment over the supertrawler; the copying by the Leader of the House of lines from The American President in a speech to the National Press Club; a Treasurer who pretends he is Bruce Springsteen and then goes on to call Republicans in the United States 'cranks and crazies' to support his political base; a Prime Minister who belittles our parliament with a trumped up and false charge of misogyny only to then back the then Speaker Peter Slipper after the substance of some repugnant text messages became public, not to mention the Attorney-General giving Mr Slipper privileged access to the judges car park; and there was the Australia Day riot that had its origins in a confected anti-Abbott manoeuvre.

The list goes on and on. The faceless men in the Labor Party removed Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister—now the Australian people want to have their say so let them have their say in an election tomorrow.

Coal Seam Gas

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (22:26): I want to speak about three aspects of the coal seam gas debate. It is a vexed issue in my seat of Page. Overwhelmingly the community is saying no. State government legislation says yes, and one local company, Metgasco, says this gives them a social licence because they have the approval of the state government. But they do not have community acceptance and therefore they do not have the social licence.

The key issue is water. In 2010, the National Water Commission produced a position statement on coal seam gas called 'The coal seam gas and water challenge'. Under the heading 'Potential risks to sustainable water management,' it says:

Extracting large volumes of low-quality water will impact on connected surface and groundwater systems, some of which may already be fully or over allocated, including the Great Artesian Basin and the Murray-Darling Basin.

Impacts on other water users and the environment may occur due to the dramatic depressurisation of the coal seam, including:

- Changes in pressures of adjacent aquifers with consequential changes in water availability
- Reductions in surface water flows in connected systems
- Land subsidence over large areas, affecting surface water systems, ecosystems, irrigation and grazing lands.

The production of large volumes of treated wastewater, if released to surface water systems, could alter natural flow patterns and have significant impacts on water quality, and river and wetland health. There is an associated risk that, if
the water is overly treated, 'clean water' pollution of naturally turbid systems may occur.

The practice of hydraulic fracturing, or fraccing, to increase gas output, has the potential to induce connection and cross-contamination between aquifers, with impacts on groundwater quality.

The reinjection of treated wastewater into other aquifers has the potential to change the beneficial use characteristics of those aquifers.

The position statement goes on to say:

The Commission is concerned that CSG development represents a substantial risk to sustainable water management given the combination of material uncertainty about water impacts, the significance of potential impacts, and the long time period over which they may emerge and continue to have effect. Therefore, an adaptive and precautionary management approach will be essential to allow for progressive improvement in the understanding of impacts, including cumulative effects, and to support timely implementation of 'make good' arrangements.

It goes on to detail 11 principles:

Specifically, the Commission proposes the following principles be applied by state and territory jurisdictions to managing the cumulative impacts of CSG water:

The interception of water by CSG extraction should be licensed to ensure it is integrated into water sharing processes from their inception.

In the conclusion, it says:

The consequences of not managing the water risks and uncertainties associated with the economic benefits of CSG are substantial.

In 2012 the commission updated that statement, and in essence it says that the framework outlined in 2010 is still the framework that applies today.

The second issue is that the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development has been established as a statutory committee—that was a national partnership agreement with states and territories—and in essence the independent expert scientific committee in certain areas will conduct bioregional assessments that look at particularly the impact on water with mining and coal seam gas mining, and until we know the result of that process my view is there should be no coal seam gas mining activity at all on the land. The third issue is fugitive emissions. People have been asking me whether fugitive emissions arising from coal seam gas are part of the whole carbon scheme, meaning the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory. Yes, they are, and the methods for coal seam gas are currently being reviewed by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency as part of the annual review of emissions estimation methods. (Time expired)

House adjourned at 22:31

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Ms Macklin to move:

(1) a Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples be appointed to inquire into and report on steps that can be taken to progress towards a successful referendum on Indigenous constitutional recognition, and in conducting the inquiry, the Committee will:

(a) consider the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Bill 2012 with a view to securing strong multi-partisan Parliamentary support for the passage of the Bill through Parliament, reporting by 30 January 2013;

(b) thereafter, work to build a secure strong multi-partisan Parliamentary consensus around the timing, specific content and wording of referendum proposals for Indigenous constitutional recognition;

(c) consider:

(i) the creation of an advisory group who's membership includes representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to guide the work of the Committee;
(ii) the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians on the process for the referendum; and

(iii) and develop mechanisms to build further engagement and support for the constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across all sectors of the community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and taking into account and complementing the existing work being undertaken by Reconciliation Australia; and;

(d) take the following matters into account:

(i) the report and extensive work of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians, including its recommendations and forms of recognition, namely that:

- section 25 be repealed
- section 51 (xxvi) be repealed
- a new 'section 51 A' be inserted, along the following lines:

Section 51A Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Recognising that the continent and its islands now known as Australia were first occupied by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

Acknowledging the continuing relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with their traditional lands and waters;

Respecting the continuing cultures, languages and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

Acknowledging the need to secure the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

The Panel further recommends that the repeal of section 51 (xxvi) and the insertion of the new 'section 51 A' be proposed together.

- a new 'section 116A' be inserted, along the following lines:

Section 116A Prohibition of racial discrimination

(1) The Commonwealth, a State or a Territory shall not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic or national origin.

(2) Subsection (1) does not preclude the making of laws or measures for the purpose of overcoming disadvantage, ameliorating the effects of past discrimination, or protecting the cultures, languages or heritage of any group.

- a new 'section 127A' be inserted, along the following lines:

Section 127A Recognition of languages

(1) The national language of the Commonwealth of Australia is English.

(2) The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are the original Australian languages, a part of our national heritage.

(ii) some of the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not included in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Bill 2012 because they can only be implemented through a change to the Australian Constitution;

(iii) the fact that those recommendations are excluded from the Bill does not preclude those recommendations being considered by the Committee as referendum proposals for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

(iv) research and findings from work currently being undertaken by Reconciliation Australia on raising awareness and support for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
(v) advice from the legal workshops being led by Reconciliation Australia and the need to seek constitutional legal advice regarding the content of any referendum proposals;

(vi) the preparedness of State and Territory governments to support a referendum on the constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and

(vii) other matters that the Committee considers may be relevant;

(2) the Committee consist of eight members, one Member of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, one Member of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips, one non-aligned Member and two Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, two Senators 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;

(3) 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 respectively;

(4) the members of the Committee hold office as a joint select committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time, whichever is the earlier;

(5) the sunset date of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Bill 2012, once passed, will provide the impetus for a future Parliament to reconstitute a like Committee to continue the work towards a successful referendum;

(6) the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Bill 2012 also includes a proposed legislative review, commencing one year after the commencement of the Act and concluding six months prior to the sunset date;

(7) the Committee elect a:

(a) Government member as its chair; and

(b) 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, and 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;

(8) in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote;

(9) 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;

(10) 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 and 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;

(11) 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;

(12) 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;

(13) the Committee or any subcommittee:

(a) have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced;

(b) may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit; and

(c) have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives;

(14) the Committee will report:

(a) on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Bill 2012, no later than 30 January 2013; and

CHAMBER
(b) as needed in order to progress constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

(15) 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

(16) a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Mr Danby to move:

That this House:

(1) urges the Australian people to remember those who perished and suffered as a result of the Ukrainian Famine 1932-33 (Holodomor), as a reminder that we should always respect the freedoms bestowed upon us; and

(2) joins with the Ukrainian World Congress of Ukrainians and the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations in calling on Australians to acknowledge the International Day of Remembrance last Saturday of November gazetted by the Ukrainian Government in respect of those who suffered and perished in the great famine of 1932-33.

Mr Abbott to present a Bill for an Act to amend the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009 and for related purposes.

Mr Morrison to present a Bill for an Act to amend the Migration Act 1958, and for related purposes.

Mr McCormack to move:

That the Basin Plan, as contained in the Select Legislative Instrument 2012 No. 2240, and made under the Water Act 2007, be disallowed.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr B Scott) took the chair at 10:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Swan Electorate: Health Services

Mr IRONS (Swan) (10:30): I take the opportunity this morning to update the House on medical and health issues in my electorate of Swan. On 15 November I met with Jeanette Hackett the Vice-Chancellor of Curtin University, Professor William Hart, the head of medicine, along with Western Australian Senator Eggleston to discuss Curtin University’s proposal for a new medical school at the Bentley campus, which is currently being considered by the federal government. It was good to visit the university with Senator Eggleston who, of course, has plenty of experience in medical matters, having been a practising doctor in the north-west of Western Australia for many years before he became a senator. We were able to tour the biosciences research precinct and discuss the medical school proposal in more detail with Ms Hackett and Professor Hart. Senator Eggleston and I are supportive of the medical school.

There is a shortage of doctors in WA. An article in the West Australian last weekend suggested that there was a shortage of 1,000 GPs across the state. Due to the shortage, we are currently taking overseas trained doctors, and we have been looking into some of the issues surrounding this trend in the Standing Committee on Health and Ageing with a report that was recently tabled. There are many overseas trained doctors across my electorate and they are much loved by the local communities they loyally serve. However, stats suggest that, even with these overseas doctors, we are not meeting the demand for GPs, and we need to look to the future and encourage as many people as possible to study medicine in WA. This needs to be a priority for all WA MPs from all parties. Curtin University is willing to be part of this drive to secure more doctors and we need to support them. Once again, in the chamber, I urge the federal government to provide support.

Over time, the new medical school could also strengthen Bentley Hospital with potential partnerships to be developed. We worked hard at Bentley Hospital to keep elective surgery services and to secure a commitment from the Barnett government to review a Labor decision to remove maternity services in 2014. We must keep a strong local hospital in Swan, and I will continue to support the Bentley Hospital.

On a further health issue, I have been working with John McGrath, the member for South Perth, to resolve an issue at the Mends Street Medical Centre in South Perth. The centre, which is popular among local residents, was closed recently after management problems. The doctors and the rent were not being paid, and the centre could not remain open. John McGrath and I have been in discussions with the AMA, the doctors and the patients in our attempts to have the centre reopened. The good news is that the centre has now been reopened after issues with the lease were resolved. We have met the new owner, Paris, who is in the process of opening the new centre. We will continue to work with Paris to help her resolve the many issues associated with reopening, including accessing medical files. Community services are important in Swan and health services in particular are essential. I continue to work with these for the community services in my electorate of Swan.
New South Wales Government

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (10:33): Since the O'Farrell government came to power, New South Wales has been subject to a rollout of service cuts that have greatly reduced the ability of schools, hospitals, community services and other bodies to serve the people of the state. In particular, the cuts to emergency services, including the fire brigade, by Mr O'Farrell risk the reach and influence of these essential operations. Mr O'Farrell said his cuts would not affect the frontline, but since when were firefighters not frontline? In civilian life, you cannot get any more frontline than that. They are there when our buildings, our homes, our factories and our bushland burns. If a person is hit by a train or run over by a semitrailer, they are the ones that go in there to collect the body parts and literally hose the bodies off the bottom of these vehicles.

Things that most of us would not even dream of they do on a daily basis. When families are killed in car accidents and house fires, they are the ones that are there. When people are trapped in cars, they are there. They are there for chemical spills, toxic gas, poisons and explosives—stuff that kills you. They are there for rescue in high places, in caves and in swift water. The police, paramedics and firefighters in civilian life are as frontline as you can get. When you cut funding to these frontline services you risk not only the community that they serve but the health and safety of the firefighters themselves. Yet, the O'Farrell government has cut 420 firefighters from the state and rural fire service, removed $64 million from the budget of fire and rescue, and dozens of fire stations have been closed so far. The drop in funding will mean stations will be forced to temporarily close if a firefighter is not able to work their shift because, for example, he or she is sick. It seems that up to eight fire stations out of the 70 in Sydney will be closed on any given day and response times will undoubtedly blow out. But that is not all.

On the one hand the O'Farrell government is cutting frontline services and on the other hand it is charging us more. It plans to shift the major cost of the fire brigades from the insurance companies to the householder in the form of a fire tax of up to $300 on every household. This levy would be identical for every household. The owner of a one-bedroom unit would pay the same tax as the owner of a large mansion. Undoubtedly, as these costs would be passed on, a renter of a one-bedroom unit would pay the same tax as the owner of a large mansion.

Leaving aside the inequity, we pay more yet we get less. If we are going to pay more, I say to Mr O'Farrell, give us more. I am not saying here that the budgets of emergency services should be sacrosanct; obviously, they should not be. We should look for more efficiencies through training and fire safety audits, which all reduce the likelihood of fire. But those efforts also are affected by the budget with Barry O'Farrell taking the axe and halving the advertising budget for fire safety messages.

We are approaching the bushfire season and I call on the Abbott opposition to condemn the cuts by the New South Wales state government—cuts that will have a devastating impact on local communities and on the people who protect and care for us at our worse moments.

Hasluck Electorate: Peppermint Dance Company

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (10:36): On Friday night I had the privilege of attending the Peppermint Dance Company showcase. Peppermint Dance Company is a local business and a
great example of individuals coming together to benefit the community. Peppermint began as a hobby for director Nadia Schimmel. While she was studying at university she continued and it grew very quickly. Nadia's classes were drawing in people from across my local community for regular dance lessons across 10 different styles of dance. Since humble beginnings in a local school hall, Peppermint has grown to a dance company with around 250 students.

Friday night was Peppermint's fourth annual showcase of the dance work of its students. The showcase was a spectacular display of dance with dancers of all ages. The highlight of the evening was hearing the stories behind the dancers and the dances. I was struck by the story of mums who had joined Peppermint to share a common interest with their children who were learning to dance. One mum told me, 'It was great to do something for myself that is part of a team.' This mum had never had the courage to dance before. I can tell you that, watching her dance, she no longer lacks confidence.

I was also impressed by a group of Peppermint dance students who call themselves Art in Movement. Art in Movement is a group of Thornlie Senior High School students who were, up until a few months ago, disaffected and struggling at school. One of these students, Ryan Bell, came to Peppermint to take on a work experience placement. The partnership between Peppermint and Ryan was a success and Ryan continued volunteering at Peppermint long after his official work placement had concluded. The commitment that Ryan demonstrated to his work experience placement at Peppermint helped Peppermint and the teachers at his school realise that a program between Peppermint and the Thornlie Senior High School was a valuable way to help young students engage with school. It was through this revelation that Art in Movement was born.

As Peppermint's Nadia told me, Art In Movement is a group of nine students from Thornlie Senior High School who came to Peppermint completely disengaged from school. These students had all but given up on high school, with an average of just 30 per cent class attendance. Peppermint embarked on a program to allow these students the opportunity to take dance classes as part of their high school curriculum. The only catch was they had to continue with their attendance for their other classes. As Nadia told me on Friday night, the turnaround in these students is remarkable. The general school attendance has risen from 30 to 90 per cent and their academic performance has reflected their increase in attendance. For the first time, these students have found their niche and are engaging in their schooling.

We know that sometimes education cannot always follow a formula or a script. Some students need different opportunities. Art in Movement and the fantastic work that Peppermint Dance Company does in my community are examples of this. I offer my sincere thanks and congratulations to Nadia and the Peppermint dance teachers for their commitment to helping young people enjoy dance and engage in education.

**Fawkes, Corporal Joseph Henry**

Mr **BRADBURY** (Lindsay—Assistant Treasurer and Minister Assisting for Deregulation) (10:39): At the age of 91, Penrith's retired Corporal Joseph Henry Fawkes has just embarked on one of the great journeys of his life. After 67 years, Mr Fawkes received the closure he needed earlier this month when three of his fallen comrades were laid to rest with the decency and respect they deserved but never previously received.
Earlier this year I was approached by Mr Gary Dean, a friend of Henry Fawkes, who told me of his long and distinguished career in the armed services. I was greatly moved by his story. Mr Fawkes joined the Army at the age of 18 and was recruited into the Australian Z Special Unit. The unit was made up of around eight soldiers who would steal enemy territory and blow up ammunition dumps.

Mr Fawkes remembers serving in World War II as if it were yesterday. In 1945, he recalls interviewing natives on Celebes Island in Indonesia. He and his comrades had been waiting for a seaplane to take them out when they were ambushed by the enemy. As the Japanese opened fire, Mr Fawkes saw his lieutenant get shot and he raced over to pull him out of danger. The lieutenant died in Mr Fawkes's arms and two other men from the unit were also killed. The three men were buried in a common, unmarked grave. Their remains were shifted by the US military from the Celebes to the Philippines.

Mr Fawkes has spent the past 67 years wondering where his fallen comrades were laid to rest and wishing they could be honoured and remembered with proper headstones. This year, he finally received the closure he needed. As the last surviving member of his unit, Mr Fawkes was notified that the remains of his comrades had been identified and were to be reburied in Bomana Cemetery in Port Moresby as a part of the 70th anniversary of Kokoda celebrations.

Determined to bid farewell to his comrades with the respect and dignity they deserved, Mr Fawkes was eager to embark on the trip to Port Moresby. After hearing Henry's moving story, I contacted the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Warren Snowdon, who immediately arranged for Mr Fawkes and his daughter to attend the Port Moresby commemoration as guests of the federal government. Mr Fawkes said he would proudly represent all his comrades at the service, which was held on 6 November this year.

Henry Fawkes is an unsung hero of the Penrith region. He has devoted his life to serving his nation and his local community through a range of charitable ventures. I take the opportunity today to congratulate Henry on his exceptional service and I wish him, his wife, Lyn, and his family all the very best for the future.

Bonner Electorate: Volunteers

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (10:42): It is with the greatest privilege that I rise today to bring to the attention of the House two magnificent constituents of Bonner who have over many years demonstrated extraordinary amounts of selfless sacrifice to help those in the community who are less fortunate than themselves.

Marjory Hayes has lived in the Wynnum district in my electorate of Bonner for 76 years. Over these many years she has been heavily involved in numerous community groups in the area and is fondly known by many as 'Granny' Hayes. Her time is spent volunteering for the local Salvation Army jumble shop, at the Pleasantville Nursing Home in the staff canteen, with the Red Shield Appeal and with Legacy. Mrs Hayes has also had a longstanding association with the Mount Gravatt Show and has assisted in the Work for the Dole activity at Mission Australia. Furthermore, through her networking abilities and her numerous contacts and friends, Mrs Hayes has been able to assist young women in the bayside area with upskilling to help them re-enter the workforce. Every Christmas Mrs Hayes travels throughout the bayside area and visits the residents of pensioner units with a small gift. She is
an outstanding member of the community, and those local to Wynnum are very blessed to have such a wonderful citizen in their area.

I also take this time to acknowledge the fantastic work of one of the local sergeants in my area, Sergeant Peter Farley, who has recently retired after 37 years of service to the community, with the last 17 years of service at the Bayside PCYC. During Sergeant Farley’s time on the police force he formulated the first Queensland police service documented youth strategy, and his clear passion for helping the children in our community has been prevalent in the large proportion of time he has spent on developing programs at the Bayside PCYC to help keep youth of the area away from crime. As one of the true nice guys in the Bonner electorate, Sergeant Farley has dedicated his time to improving the Wynnum community, and I wish him all the very best in his retirement.

Bonner is incredibly lucky to have upstanding citizens like Marjory Hayes and Peter Farley, and I am sure that everyone will agree with me when I say that volunteers and the police are the lifeblood of the community. They selflessly give so much of their time to better the lives of those less fortunate than themselves. It is only fitting that I acknowledge two such examples in this chamber, and on behalf of the wider Bonner community, I give my heartfelt thanks. I know that these sentiments that I have expressed today are shared by all those that they assist.

Hindmarsh Electorate: Remembrance Day

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh—Second Deputy Speaker) (10:45): I rise today to speak about the ceremony that a lot of us would have gone to on 11 November, which is Remembrance Day. I want to talk about a particular poet in my electorate who composed a poem which was read on Remembrance Day at the Hilton RSL at the West Torrens Memorial Gardens. This poem by Tonie Pannenburg, which I thought was particularly powerful, is, in its way, very, very beautiful. The poem is called *Poppie Day*, and it reads:

Scarlet poppies with stamens of black
We wear for the boys who never came back
The ones that lost youth in the fighting fields
The ones who used courage as their shields
For the boys that shed blood on the desert sands
And on the ground of foreign lands.
We wear the poppies with love and pride
While the spirit of youth walks by our side.
The memory of lads we loved before
Will live in our hearts for evermore.
Those laughing boys of yesteryears
Who sailed away on a sea of tears
To keep this land safe for you and me
They lay down their lives for you and for me
They lay down their lives to keep us free.
So long will we wear the poppies of red
To remind us that we sleep safe in our bed
That our children with in a land that is free
We salute the boys of Gallipoli.

It is a beautiful poem, and so poignant for any occasion on which we remember those who have fought for our nation and made the ultimate sacrifice for their loved ones and fellow countrymen.

It was a lovely ceremony, as I said, held at the West Torrens Memorial Gardens. In attendance was the mayor and, of course, the President of the RSL, Mr Rob Mundy. This speech gives me the opportunity to thank, on behalf of the RSL and the West Torrens council, Qantas and Virgin. As you know, my electorate is right under the flight path next to the airport and the Hilton RSL and the West Torrens Memorial Gardens are exactly under the flight path.

Every year at 11 o'clock our ceremony is interrupted by flights. A couple of years ago, I wrote to the executives of Qantas and Virgin. I congratulate them because they have delayed their take-offs and landings by a few minutes to allow us to have that service uninterrupted instead of having screaming jets fly over. That has always been a bit of an issue. I am really pleased that they kept their word and continue to honour Remembrance Day.

Forde Electorate

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (10:47): This is one of my last opportunities this year to share some positive news about the electorate of Forde. First of all, I am very proud to announce that the Beenleigh PCYC has taken out the best branch of the year for 2012 for the third year running. This is a major accomplishment for the Beenleigh PCYC considering there has been a staff restructure and major renovations occurring in the branch. Their Two Tribes program was also victorious in the award of excellence category. This program has grown over the past 12 months with 36 young foreign nationals having now taken part in learning how to build self-esteem and self-belief. I thank the branch manager Mark Haestier, and assistant manager Matt Massouras, as well as Miss Wendy Captain from the Beenleigh State High School, and Evangeline and Eddi Goodfellow, for making the Two Tribes program the success that it is today.

I very much value the contribution the PCYC makes to our community, and we look forward to that contribution continuing for many years to come. They continue to go above and beyond by reaching out to young people and helping them to get the most out of life. They deliver a number of crime prevention and youth welfare programs. In fact they deliver more than most of the PCYCs in Queensland. They deliver programs to help with youth employment, leadership programs, programs for Indigenous children, programs for women who have experienced domestic violence, youth homelessness, people with disabilities and life skills programs like cooking and child protection. More recently they commenced the Block Program, which provides young people with strategies to deal with bullies who tease them, intimidate them and harass them. The members of our community would be lost without their ongoing support and dedication.

In other great news in the community another of our organisations, the Beenleigh Tennis Club, recently was awarded the highest honour in the state of being named the most outstanding club at the 2012 Queensland Tennis Awards. My congratulations go to the
coaching staff, Ian and James Rapkins, Alison Scott, Damian Williams, Chantel Jamieson and to the President, Jeff Scott.

Finally, I congratulate Park Ridge State High School and Loganlea State High School for cleaning up at the recent South East Regional School Based Traineeship and Apprenticeship Awards. It was great to be there to see our local youth take home four of the six major awards, as well as eight of the 13 individual industry awards. Well done to Nellie Fitzpatrick from Park Ridge High School for taking out school based trainee of the year and the business services award. Congratulations also to fellow Park Ridge High School students Tony Norio, Danica Clancy and Loganlea high school's Dudley Monaghan for winning industry awards.

**Fowler Electorate: Multiculturalism**

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (10:50): As the federal member for Fowler I have the privilege and responsibility of representing the most multicultural electorate in the whole of Australia. Recently it was brought to my attention that a certain current affairs program was aired and was considered very demeaning to Asian people to the point that they thought it was very discriminatory. A significant proportion of my electorate speaks an Asian language at home. As a matter of fact, 30 per cent of my electorate is made up of Asian speakers. My office is located in Cabramatta and, therefore, I am able to immerse myself in the Asian culture. I believe that multiculturalism is one of the greatest strengths that we have in this country, and we are very fortunate as a nation to be able to learn from so many different cultures.

I bring the House's attention to some recent events which have been organised by my Vietnamese community in particular. Recently I attended the charity dinner organised by the Vietnamese Community in Australia, New South Wales Chapter. The VCA spent the past couple of months fundraising for the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia. VCA President, Mr Thanh Nguyen, and VCA Vice-President, Dr Tien Nguyen, have advised me that the fundraising campaign was very successful. Prior to the dinner they had raised $50,000, and at the dinner at Canley Vale they raised another $90,000.

I also refer to the fundraising effort of a very good friend of mine, Bao Khanh Nguyen. She is a prominent human rights campaigner, but is also a person who single-handedly over the last month alone raised $13,000 for Legacy. She is very determined that we do as much as we can to look after Australian diggers and their families, particularly those who are still suffering in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

I was also able to attend a function recently organised by the Vietnamese Students' Association, a very active body in my electorate. This fundraising effort was called the Senhoa project and was organised to help survivors of human trafficking in Cambodia. Predominantly the people being trafficked are Vietnamese girls from the ages of eight through to 16. My thanks go to Nhi Pham and Khoa Nguyen, as well as the Vietnamese Students' Association as a whole. They have taken it upon themselves, as well as being very successful in their own fields in Australia, to make sure that they are doing good work to look after people less privileged elsewhere. I think that is a credit to the mentality they bring to the modern face of Australia.

I consider that we have genuine strengths in multiculturalism and we should not be fearful about getting up and saying that this is one of the greatest things that Australia has going for it. It is the heart of our diversity.
Monday, 26 November 2012    HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  13273

Solomon Electorate: Child Care

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (10:54): A few weeks ago, in celebration of World Teachers' Day, I was invited to the Top End Early Learning Centre. This fantastic childcare centre in my electorate, like many others, provides outstanding service to the people of Darwin and Palmerston. The coalition understands the demand for centres like this across the country and the pressure working mums and dads face as they try to gain access to affordable child care. My constituents face some of the highest cost-of-living pressures in the country and this has only been compounded by the Gillard Labor government's toxic carbon tax on everything. In September 2011 it was estimated that one in every four children between the ages of zero and 12 require some type of childcare arrangement. Under the Gillard Labor government, childcare prices have risen by 20 per cent. They just do not understand the detrimental impact this has on the parents of my electorate who wish to either remain or return to the workforce and rely on child care. The coalition will, if elected at the next election, ask the Productivity Commission to undertake an inquiry into childcare centres. We understand that childcare needs have changed and that families struggle to meet the high cost.

We also understand the need for the continuing support of outstanding service providers like the Top End Early Learning Centre. Betty McKinlay, the director, and her staff at the Top End Early Learning Centre provide an excellent service to the community. I wish to recognise their fabulous contribution. Staff who were there on the day included Kim McKinlay, Shane McGregor, Lucia Vieira, Sinead Hearne, Sharon Brander, Aimee Bell, Belinda Waites, Kendall Gates, Michaeline Tinkham, Marj Plant, Violet Burnett, Taemi Kondo, Yen Tran, Sharon Jolley, Kayla Ralph, Linda Beames and Pauline Williams. I thank all of these wonderful staff for the excellent contribution that they make. The Top End Early Learning Centre is a fantastic facility and provides an outstanding community service to my electorate. It was my pleasure to present them with the appreciation awards. It was delightful to see the faces of the staff when they were recognised and acknowledged for the work that they do. I thank Betty McKinlay, who is the director, for inviting me to come along to the centre and for her initiative of creating the appreciation awards. It was wonderful to see first-hand the fabulous work that the staff carry out at this amazing facility and I look forward to going back there.

Women in the Workforce

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (10:57): I rise today to celebrate the significant achievements of some exceptional Canberra women. I want to start by congratulating Ondina Gregoric, who has been named as the Council of Small Business of Australia's 2012 Small Business Champion. Ondina is the first female winner of this award and I congratulate her. I also congratulate COSBOA for recognising Ondina's contribution and, indeed, for recognising the value of small business in the country.

I recently convened the Parliamentary Friends of Small Business Group with the member for Wright to promote small business and achievers like Ondina. Ondina represents the many facets of small business. She is an entrepreneur, a consultant and a manager. For over two decades, Ondina has operated a range of successful businesses. She has been a representative on many boards and formal committees, including being the National President of Women Chiefs of Enterprises International and a management group member of Economic Security
for Women. Ondina is one of the growing number of small business women driving our economy, particularly here in Canberra, and leading by example in the business sector.

I know Ondina and I know that she has a particular passion for delivering an exceptional level of customer service and is committed to professional development. Ondina is the 'go to' person for women in management and in positions of influence who need high-level advice on style and presentation. She has participated in many industry and community groups, providing her time and expertise freely. Thank you, Ondina.

This year I was also honoured to present awards at the 2012 National Association of Women in Construction awards. The NAWIC is a not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to promote and improve the construction industry by the advancement of women within it. This very important group promotes education and contributes to the betterment of the construction industry by encouraging women to pursue and establish careers in that industry. For the record, the Crystal Vision Award for Advancing and Furthering the Interests of Women in the Construction Industry was won by Gesa Ruge, Assistant Professor in Building and Construction Management at the University of Canberra, and a very dear friend of mine. The ACT Tradeswoman of the Year is Dimitra Caville from ACT Steelfixing. The ACT Professional Woman of the Year is Karen Emms from Canberra International Airport. The ACT Future Leader is Suzanne Moalis from landscape architecture. The ACT Construction Support Woman of the Year is Angela Tyrrell. And the Outstanding Achievement in Design Award went to Greer Gehrt from the National Museum of Australia.

NAWIC celebrates these outstanding ACT women leading the way in construction, in small business, in mentoring and in leadership roles. I am honoured to represent a community with so many successful Canberra women in small business doing so much great work in mentoring, leadership and driving our economy.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Queensland Recreational Fishing Programs

Debate resumed on the motion by Ms Livermore:
That this House:
(1) opposes the Queensland Government's gutting of Sunfish and major recreational fishing programs;
(2) notes the continued efforts by the Liberal National Party (LNP) in Queensland and nationally to undermine recreational fishing by redefining, then cutting frontline services;
(3) notes that:
  (a) before the Queensland election, Premier Newman said the public service had 'nothing to fear' from a new LNP government; and
  (b) Federal Minister Ludwig has written on behalf of Sunfish Queensland to his counterpart, requesting urgent advice on the destructive cuts;
(4) strongly supports recreational fishers;
(5) calls on the Queensland Government to restore funding as a matter of urgency; and
(6) notes the Federal Coalition's failure to act despite the Leader of the Opposition being fully briefed on the Queensland Government's budget cuts before they were announced.
Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (11:00): When I submitted this notice of motion condemning the Newman government for its attacks on recreational fishing, I thought I would be making quite a statement on behalf of rec fishe rs in Central Queensland and across the state. Here was my opportunity to get stuck into this shocking government, condemning it in the strongest terms for its arrogant and dismissive treatment of this important section of the community and a significant part of our local economy. But, as it turns out, condemnation of the Newman government does not have quite the same currency today that I expected it would. Condemning the Newman government is becoming quite a crowded field—now everyone is in on the act.

In just the past couple of days we have had Clive Palmer—life member of the LNP and the man who bankrolled the party into power—resign from the party in protest against what Campbell Newman is doing to Queensland. And yesterday we got the news that Ray Hopper, a long-serving LNP member of parliament, has left the party to sit in parliament as a member of the Katter party. He, too, did not want to be part of what the Newman LNP government is dishing out to Queensland and to regional Queensland in particular. When it comes to condemning the Newman government, it is hard for me to compete with the likes of Clive Palmer when he says:

… the current government is much worse than anything that was around at the time of the Fitzgerald inquiry—

and—

… I do think the government is crooked.

It is strange days indeed when I find myself in the same camp as Clive Palmer, but these are strange days in Queensland and dark days, too, under the leadership of Campbell Newman and the LNP government.

Amongst the many groups in Queensland who are feeling let down and under attack from the LNP government is recreational fishers and their representatives in Sunfish. Before the state election in March, the LNP told recreational fishers in writing that, if elected:

… an LNP government will work closely with stakeholders to enhance the experience of recreational fishers in Queensland.

Like so many others in Queensland, such as public servants, rural firefighters and community service organisations, recreational fishers are now learning that the LNP's promises are worth nothing now that it is in power—and in absolute power in a way never seen before in our state or any other. Barely eight months after the election, the Newman led LNP state government has already broken its pre-election promises regarding its support for recreational fishing and is in the process of setting back fisheries management in Queensland to failed models that were consigned to history in Australia a decade or more ago.

Recreational fishing in Queensland has been an integral part of the state's culture and heritage since white settlement. In its own election policy statements, the LNP promoted the fact that there are currently over 750,000 Queenslanders who enjoy recreational fishing and promised that it would 'restore the health of Queensland's fishery'. Up to 30 per cent of the population of some coastal regions in Queensland engage in this healthy outdoor activity and contribute, conservatively, many millions of dollars into the state's economy every year. So it is extremely concerning to watch the new LNP state government now thumb its nose at...
recreational fishers and withdraw funding from a range of critically important programs and initiatives.

These cuts include: an $8 million cut from the fisheries budget, 60 jobs cut from fisheries Queensland, the cessation of funding to Sunfish Queensland, the cessation of the fisheries observer program, the cessation of the industry development program for commercial and recreational fishing, the cessation of the Fishcare volunteer program and the cutting of all funding to the national Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, which is about the future of fisheries in our state and, indeed, Australia. The list goes on.

Of particular concern to recreational fishers in Central Queensland is the way these cuts will hit fish-stocking groups and the internationally recognised and acclaimed SunTag fish-tagging program—the brainchild of Bill Sawnyok in my electorate. The recreational fishing community feel betrayed by a government that said nothing about these cuts before the election. Robin Caddy, President of the Freshwater Fishing and Stocking Association of Queensland, said of the cuts, 'To be treated in this manner is deplorable.' David Bateman, Chairman of Sunfish, said in Bush 'n Beach Fishing magazine that his delegates were astounded that the government's first actions were to cut recreational fishing community projects.

Recreational fishers and their representatives—as members here from Queensland and elsewhere know—are passionate and knowledgeable about their sport of fishing, and deserve to have their concerns and ideas about fisheries management taken seriously by the state government. They have important things to say about the best models for fisheries management and need to be listened to.

It has been reported to me by constituents who attended the National Recreational Fishing Conference, on the Gold Coast in August this year, that they were actually embarrassed to admit they came from Queensland when they saw all the good things being done in other states by fisheries departments. Interestingly, it should be noted that Senator Joe Ludwig, the Commonwealth minister with responsibility for fisheries, attended and spoke at the national conference. I believe that the federal government put some sponsorship towards that national conference as well. The federal minister attended while Queensland's fisheries minister McVeigh declined the invitation to attend and was, in fact, conspicuous by his absence. Deputy Speaker, what sort of message did that send to recreational fishers in Queensland? I have a fair idea about how recreational fishers are feeling when I returned from a glorious day out on Keppel Bay in our family's tinny in early October. The carpark at the Rosslyn Bay boat ramp was absolutely packed, and every vehicle had a notice on its windscrew telling boaties and fishers about what the LNP state government is proposing to do with the money they paid towards recreational fishing initiatives.

Since the mid-1990s, Queensland recreational boat owners have been paying an additional levy—I think it is about $18—on top of their annual boat registration payment. That levy has been specifically quarantined to be used for the direct benefit of recreational fishers in Queensland. This levy was introduced as a recommendation of the Labor Party's groundbreaking Burns inquiry into recreational fishing in Queensland. Of course, that reference to the Burns inquiry is a reference to the beloved Tom Burns who members on this side of the House and most Queenslanders would recognise as one of the strongest advocates for recreational fishers, and indeed one of the strongest practitioners of recreational fishing
that you could find. That was originally called the private pleasure vessel levy, but evolved into the recreational use fee a decade or so ago. However, these funds have continued to be largely directed to programs and projects that do benefit recreational fishing, that is, until now. Unofficial advice from Fisheries Queensland to Sunfish members has confirmed that around half of the funds raised this year from the recreational user fee—an estimated $4½ million—will be directed towards the core business operations of the agency. So, it is not for fish-tagging programs, not for fish-stocking programs, not for the teach your kids to fish programs that have been so popular amongst the recreational fishing community. In other words, the Newman government is raiding funds that come from the recreational fishing community to pay for the core operational costs of running its department. The minister has denied this, but we are getting used to the Queensland government running for cover when the community starts to react to its broken promises and cuts to important programs and services.

The fact is that the cuts to jobs and programs and attacks on community-level organisations, which Sunfish is campaigning against, are completely consistent with the Newman government's approach and track record in government. The recreational fishing community is now experiencing the same treatment from the Newman government as so many other parts of Queensland—cuts in funding and scrapping of programs that had broad community support and denigration by the government when they dared to oppose its destructive agenda. Cutting funding to the peak body, Sunfish, and sidelining it from involvement in fishing policies is an attempt to shut down opposition from the sector. In my 15 years of experience, I have found Sunfish to be a valuable voice in issues and debates regarding matters that affect the recreational fishing community and the fishing sector more broadly. I especially remember and pay tribute to the leadership shown by local Sunfish representatives at the time that we were trying to get the best outcome for Central Queensland fishers from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park’s Green Zone process 10 years ago. Local Sunfish delegates worked closely with me and the chair of GBRMPA at the time, the Hon. Virginia Chadwick, and played a very constructive role in coordinating the views of our local fishing community and putting them forward to GBRMPA to achieve a successful outcome.

Most recreational fishers prefer just to go fishing rather getting involved in politics. However, I am seeing a growing anger among the recreational fishing community in Queensland, which is going to result in a backlash against the arrogance of the Newman government. I wish this sector and their representatives all the best, and will support their efforts where I can. I know I am joined by my stage Labor colleague the member for Rockhampton, Bill Byrne, who will be speaking on this matter in state parliament tomorrow night.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (11:10): I rise to speak on the matter before the house. I am a great supporter of Sunfish. I think they are great organisation. The Deputy Mayor of Townsville, Vern Veitch, is a former North Queensland representative of Sunfish. The member for Capricornia has said that the organisation is going to be decimated and that it is going to go away. It is a membership based organisation and what the Newman government has done is remove funding from a membership based organisation. It is not the death of Sunfish—far from it—and it is not the death of recreational fishing as she would have you believe. As a matter of fact, expenditure on recreational fishing services in 2012-13 will be in excess of $10 million from the Newman state government such as: compliance, surveillance
and enforcement, including boat ramp signage and community service announcements, of over $3.2 million; communication and educational programs, including a free handbook for recreational fishers of $500,000; fish-stocking and recovery programs; pet fish education and marine habitat protection of $2 million; research, monitoring and reporting activities of $2.8 million; and scientific assessment and policy development of $2 million. Those are the things that, I think, the member for Capricornia may very well want to look back on.

I will include 100 per cent support for her words towards Tom Burns. Recreational fishing in Queensland has never had a better friend than Tom Burns and it is a legend that is boat was called The Electorate. When people would ring up his office and need to speak to the member they would say, 'I'm sorry, Mr Burns is out in The Electorate', which would be out on the bay having a good fish.

Let us be very realistic about this, only three per cent of recreational fishers are members of Sunfish which is a membership based organisation. Well may the member for Capricornia talk about growing anger in the recreational fishing public. It is not the problems we are having with Sunfish at the moment, it is the problem we are having with this government and the closure of the Coral Sea. I did not hear the member for Capricornia talk about this government's closure of the Coral Sea. I did not hear her talk about the lack of science or the lack of any sort of science based on making the decision to close the Coral Sea. What I hear is the minister for environment Mr Burke say that the science was specifically excluded from the decision to close the Coral Sea.

We campaigned hard in 2010 and said that a vote for Labor was a vote to close down the Coral Sea. I was on a radio fishing show with the then-candidate for the Labor Party at that election. He poked me in the chest and said, over the airwaves, that it was something starting with 'bull' and ending with the letter 'T'. He said it would not happen and that he would cross the floor if it did happen. We said that the problem you have here is that the Labor Party is beholden to the Greens. Whatever the Greens say they will do. So, straight up, they form the government and go straight to closing the Coral Sea. The Pew Foundation was in North Queensland for nearly 2½ days, and this government just jumped on it and closed the Coral Sea, without one ounce of science.

While this has been going on the operational funding for the Australian Institute of Marine Science has been cut. They have a $120 million boat sitting down at the wharf that they cannot afford to operate as they should. I should back up Minister Burke here. The recreational fisher, with the closure of the Coral Sea, is not under such great duress. It is a long way from the base at Townsville, about 300 kilometres. The recreational fishers are asking, 'What's going to happen next?' As with everything else, the government have a flippant disregard for what they said before the election. They said there would be no carbon tax, that they would not touch private health insurance or the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme and that there would be cuts in company tax. They do backflips galore. What the recreational fishers are most worried about is what is going to happen next. Straightaway GetUp has mounted a campaign, the 'Protect our Coral Sea' campaign, urging you to do all you can to protect a special place from future development through a comprehensive and effective management plan—to extend the marine park zone around Shark, Vema and Osprey reefs off Cairns. Within two weeks of the decision coming down, the government are beholden to the Greens and already a campaign to close out recreational fishers is happening. So, if you
experience extreme anger from recreational fis hers every time you pull up to put a tinnie in the water, it will be because the government cannot be trusted.

We went to the 2010 elections saying that we would stop this, but we have not been able to. We had a recreational fishing forum in Townsville just recently. The forum wanted it recognised that the ability to go out the front and have a fish is part of our lifestyle. The recreational fis hers in Townsville want it recognised that they are the environment's friend, not its enemy. There is no-one in North Queensland or Central Queensland going out the front and dropping sticks of gelignite in the water as this government seems to be portraying the recreational fis hers doing.

The Howard government established the green zones. There was a lot of disquiet about the establishment of green zones. But the recreational fis hers are admitting that the establishment of green zones off the coast of Australia has been a fantastic success. What we need to do now is extend that to establish artificial reefs so that when those fish get hunted off the green zones they have somewhere to go and can get bigger. We need to have an artificial reef in a yellow zone, where you would have no anchor and either trawl or have one fish/one rod and fish those areas there. That is what recreational fishermen want. The recreational fisher wants something positive from this government, and this government is doing everything it can to make it harder for the recreational fisher—because this government is beholden to the Greens.

This government is prepared to sacrifice everyone in Queensland so that every Vespa riding, black skivvy wearing, soy latte drinking Greenie in the inner cities of Sydney and Melbourne can sit there and vote for them. They are prepared to kiss it goodbye.

All the way through this, we do support the recreational fisher and we do support the commercial fishing industry. Sunfish, as I said, is a membership based organisation. When left with 20 years of Labor mismanagement, there are some things that are very uncomfortable to do. As I said before, when it comes down to what is actually happening there—and you will see what the Newman government is doing for recreational fis hers—it is a very, very good picture. Sunfish is not going to go away. Sunfish is a membership based organisation. As with everything else, it will have its state funding removed and then can go and approach more people. More than three per cent of the recreational fis hers are members of Sunfish. Sunfish as an organisation must grow that. All the way through this, you see what the Newman government has done.

Mr Neumann interjecting—

Mr EWEN JONES: In excess of $10 million for recreational fis hers in 2012-13. The Campbell Newman led government in Queensland is the government that cares about all Queenslanders—not like this federal Labor government, who are prepared to kiss goodbye to everyone in Queensland to try and shore up some seats in inner-city Sydney and Melbourne. That is what the federal Labor government are trying to do. They are doing everything they possibly can to destroy recreational fishing in North Queensland—and they should be stopped. Sunfish is a great organisation and can continue to be a great organisation, but it must develop its ownership base and adjust its focus to continue to be a great organisation. I thank the House.

Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (11:20): I rise to speak in support of the motion from the member for Capricornia and thank the member for bringing this very important motion forward so that people can hear the truth. I thank the member for Herbert for putting some truth in this debate.
Finally we have a member of the opposition telling the truth about the marine parks and how far away the Coral Sea is from Townsville. I think the member for Herbert's words were that recreational fishers will not be affected because the Coral Sea is over 300 kilometres away from Townsville. Thank you for actually saying that. It was a long time coming. I will get to how far it is from Redcliffe Peninsula shortly.

I want to acknowledge the damage being done to Queensland's recreational fishing industry by the LNP and to voice my support for recreational fishers, particularly in and around my electorate of Petrie, which is bound by beautiful Moreton Bay. Just to recap, since his election Campbell Newman and the LNP government have cut $8 million from the fisheries budget, 60 jobs from fisheries Queensland, front-line fisheries researchers and funding for the National Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. But that was not enough. The LNP have also scrapped the funding for Sunfish Queensland, discontinued the Fishcare volunteer program, slashed the fisheries observer program, scaled back the freshwater fishing program, restructured the Queensland boating and fisheries patrol and rationalised Brisbane based senior management support services. And it is not just recreational fishers that Campbell Newman has in his sights. The LNP have also ceased the industry development program for commercial and recreational fishing and cut $125,000 from the Queensland Seafood Industry Association.

I know that locals in my community love to throw a line out in Moreton Bay and I do too. I know that Sunfish have always stood up for the right to do just that and I thank them for the advocacy over the years. There are four LNP state members across my electorate and not one of them has stood up to Campbell Newman on this issue. These cuts come despite pre-election promises by the Premier that the Public Service has nothing to fear and that the government would work with recreational fishers to enhance their experiences. Instead we find that by 'enhance' the LNP really meant 'cut' and when the LNP said they would not cut front-line services like fisheries officers they really meant that they would redefine the positions first. I thank Minister Ludwig, federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, for his representations to the LNP on behalf of recreational fishers and I look forward to hearing an explanation for this latest round of cuts, which are further damaging local communities like mine.

But it is not just LNP state members who owe local fishers an apology. Fishers across Moreton Bay and Brisbane's northside also deserve an apology and an explanation from the federal opposition over their recent scare campaign around the Coral Sea marine reserves. We heard from the member for Herbert about the rallies and protests against the impact on the marine park. The federal Liberal Party were so desperate to con locals in my area on this issue that they even distributed incorrect maps throughout my community, until we caught them out. On 14 November I was thrilled to hosts the Petrie community cabinet at Hercules Road State School on the Redcliffe Peninsula, where the Prime Minister, environment minister and fisheries minister took questions from residents on this issue. One woman, Wendy, asked if the Liberals were right when they said that locals would only be able to fish in their bathtubs from now on. The answer was a resounding no, and I thank the minister for the environment for setting the record straight on that occasion. The fact is that local fishers would have to travel over 400 kilometres from the Redcliffe Peninsula to visit our marine reserves. There are not a lot of tinnies equipped for that journey. In fact, the local candidates and Senator Boyce...
were all out there in Lilley, across the bridge from Redcliffe Peninsula. They have photos on
their websites of a tinny with the bay right in the background. It must be a really good camera
to be out further than 400 kilometres and make a tinny look like it is sitting near the beach
with a line thrown in.

I make no apologies for protecting our environment for future generations. I congratulate
the environment minister on the recent declaration and I thank the many residents in my
electorate who have written to me in support of our action on this issue. The Gillard
government is a strong supporter of Australian recreational fishing. That is why we developed
and held roundtables chaired by the fisheries minister to hear directly from the industries. We
have to have a balanced approach on this issue. I do not believe it is balanced when we hear
from the member for Herbert that it is okay for the state government to take funding away
from organisations if they are member based organisations. Go and tell all of my community
organisations that are member based organisations: 'You should welcome these cuts. You can
go out and get more members. It's a great way to build your organisation.' Organisations
across the board are suffering in my community, including in fisheries and recreational
fisheries; Sunfish is one of those. We stand by the great work they have done. We stand by
our recreational fishers.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (11:25): I am very surprised that this motion has even
been raised in this place, because what we have here is a Labor government criticising a state
government for cleaning up Labor's mess in Queensland. The colossal amount of Labor
wastes in the resource-rich state of Queensland managed to send the state broke in the middle
of the biggest mining boom that the state has ever seen. Such was Labor's track record for
economic stupidity, so sick were taxpayers of seeing their tax dollars wasted, they delivered
the most crushing electoral defeat on record for Labor. The reality for us Queenslanders is
this: every day that we collectively get out of our beds we have to find $12 million just to pay
the interest on the debt legacy that Labor left Queensland. That is $12 million a day, $84
million a week, over $360 million a month and over $1 billion a quarter, just in interest on
Labor's debt. To put it in simple terms, in a bit over three days in Queensland the money we
spend on interest alone—not paying off debt, just the interest on Labor's debt—could have
been used to build a new school, maybe in Gracemere near the Capricornia electorate, or
certainly in the member for Flynn's electorate.

Every five weeks we spend enough money on interest for Labor's debt to build a new state-
of-the-art regional hospital—perhaps it could have been used to build a new Rockhampton
regional hospital. In six weeks the money spent on paying interest on Labor's debt could have
paid for a complete upgrade of the Peak Downs Highway in the Capricornia electorate. If you
wonder why spending on non-essential needs should be cut, then you have to look no further
than the Australian Labor Party.

Here we have this Labor government, having posted the four biggest budget deficits in
history, lecturing the Queensland government about how to spend money. What is worse is
that Labor would have us believe through this motion that they are somehow the fisherman's
friend. What a joke! It is like Wile E. Coyote asking the Road Runner out for a date. They
have the hide to come in here and pretend to be the friend of the fishermen and try to shift the
focus from their own ineptitude. The sheer hypocrisy of it coming from the same government
that cut funding to RecFish, the peak body representing recreational fishers in this nation, on
the ground that the organisation might disagree with them. And Labor are criticising the Queensland government for doing exactly the same thing. What debt did Labor have to pay off to cut the funding to RecFish, the national recreational fishing body? This Labor government is now wasting $100 million of taxpayer funds to shut down commercial fishing and give zero compensation to recreational fishing throughout all of the marine park closures around Australia.

This Labor government encouraged a super trawler to come to Australia, and then when the political heat came on it rewrote the law to give the environment minister the power to ban it. Then the government also gave him the power to shut down any new fishing activity in Commonwealth waters. These are all purely political motivations that are stopping criticism from key stakeholders and pandering to the Greens. Why is it that the Greens, who have but one representative in this House, are driving all the policy decisions? Is it because the Labor Party has no idea what to do? When your only skill is to waste money you need direction from somewhere, I suppose, but instead of talking with stakeholders the Labor Party takes its directions from a fringe party whose aim is to shut down every industry in Australia and set civilisation back 1,000 years.

Labor and the Greens are not the fisherman's friend. Labor and the Greens have no understanding about recreational fishing. Firmly wedged in their inner-city, latte-sipping suburbs, they think that seafood comes from restaurant kitchens and, maybe, the supermarket. They would not know a potato cod from a potato. For the benefit of those members opposite, I seek leave to table documents on the potato cod and the potato that show the difference.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Is leave granted?
A government member: No.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leave is not granted.

Mr CHRISTENSEN: They do not even want to know the difference. Information about the potato cod tabled or not, we know that these guys are prepared to mash the recreational and commercial fishing industry. They do not know fish, they do not know fishing, they do not know boats—unless they are full of illegals! We have the environment minister out there trying to sell the Coral Sea lockout, saying, 'Mums and dads are not going to take their tinny 300 kilometres out to sea.' Most of them do not take tinnies anywhere. If the environment minister took the time to go and look in the Mackay marina, for instance, he would not find tinnies docked there but very sophisticated and expensive craft that are capable of going out on five-day fishing trips, out beyond 300 kilometres. In North Queensland we have charter fishing companies that every day take people out to iconic and remote fishing locations for days at a time—places like Marion Reef, which Labor is going to shut down under these marine parks. If the environment minister consulted with the fishing industry he would know that, but instead he is too busy sending away to the Acme Company for the latest contraption to catch the latest roadrunner that the Greens are telling him to catch. Just like Wile E. Coyote, everything Labor has touched ends in disaster.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (11:30): They cannot even defend their own state government's policies. As a fellow Queenslander I thank the member for Capricornia for making this House aware of the needless pain and anxiety experienced by public sector workers, by community groups, by service providers and by ordinary men and women in the fishing industry.
perpetrated and perpetuated by Campbell Newman and the LNP state government across Queensland. In my electorate, whether you are in the rural parts or in urban parts like Ipswich, the sentiment is the same; the common complaint is the same; the refrain is the same: Campbell Newman and the state LNP government in Queensland have betrayed the people of Queensland. It is not just union members, public sector workers and community sector workers; it is also recreational fisher men and women. Campbell Newman and the LNP government have misled them all. The LNP's own policy document for the state election said:

An LNP government will also commit to no forced redundancies.

What a joke! The Premier of Queensland also said, in April 2011, when he took over the role as LNP leader:

… the public service has nothing to fear from me.

What right-wing claptrap! It is not just bureaucrats, it is not just fat cats—as he would describe them—it is doctors and nurses, it is rural fire brigade officers, it is community workers and it is even recreational fishers. Perhaps he considers Sunfish Queensland to be a bastion of highly paid officials all living large of the public largesse. You will even hear that from the tone of those opposite. Before the Queensland election, the LNP told recreational fishers that 'an LNP government will work closely with stakeholders to enhance the experience of recreational fishers in Queensland'. At best, that is another broken promise; at worst, that is an example of blatant disregard for honesty within the Queensland LNP state government.

In contrast, this federal Labor government, despite the bleatings, whinings and moanings of those opposite, is a strong supporter of the Australian recreational fishing industry. We developed and held recreational fishing roundtables chaired by the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Joseph Ludwig, bringing the sector straight to government. We supported the National Recreational Fishing Conference and we funded and implemented the national strategy for recreational fishing. At present we are engaged in the biggest single review of fisheries legislation in the history of the Commonwealth and we are looking at how the recreational sector fits into that framework. We have been able to balance the needs and rights of recreational fishers with the need to protect the environment. In Queensland, the LNP government has slashed and burned—not just in the public sector but also across the recreational fishing industries.

We know that the arrogant actions of the LNP state government in Queensland will be replicated by those opposite. We cannot trust anything their state colleagues in Queensland say, nor their federal counterparts. More hollow words and spin we have heard from the member for Herbert and the member for Dawson today.

But what have the LNP state government in Queensland done? They have cut $8 million from the fisheries budget. They have cut 60 jobs. They have ceased the fisheries observer program. They have ceased the Queensland Fishcare volunteers program. They have ceased operational activity for waterway barrier works and construction. They have cut all funding to the national Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. Again and again they have slashed and burned. They have not provided funding for the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation this year and they have axed all funding to Sunfish Queensland.
The stakeholders are livid about this. Look at what they have said. Mr Robin Caddy, President of the Freshwater Fishing and Stocking Association of Queensland, said—as quoted in *Bush 'n Beach Fishing* magazine—of the cuts by the LNP state government: ‘To be treated in this manner is deplorable.’ Mr David Bateman, the chair of Sunfish, said that his delegates ‘were astounded that the government's first action was to cut recreational fishing community projects', as quoted in that same magazine. Sunfish also said a recent letter from the LNP state minister in Queensland, Minister McVeigh, was full of 'electioneering, half-truths and inaccuracies'. The Queensland Seafood Industry Association, in its media release of 27 September, said this: 'The Queensland Seafood Industry Association has expressed serious concern about cutbacks to services announced in Fisheries Queensland. In particular, discontinuing the fisheries observer program and withdrawing funding to the federal government's Fisheries Research and Development Corporation are worrying.' That is what the stakeholders say. Those opposite cannot quote stakeholders, we know, because the stakeholders are livid with what they have done. They go on with their disingenuous argument, completely scaremongering, about what we have done in terms of Coral Sea Marine Park announcements and management.

The member for Herbert in his speech told the truth when it came to the distances and the fact that these marine parks will do good for the environment, but they will not impinge on the recreational fishing industry. Those opposite should stand up to Campbell Newman and stand up for Queensland.

**Mr O’DOWD (Flynn) (11:35):** The motion highlights that the federal government is completely out of touch with the Australian fishing industry. They are clearly in no position to be critical of the Queensland state government given the lockup of vast areas of our fishing based on a whim. More than 100 regional communities and many more businesses throughout Australia rely on the fishing industry for their livelihoods, but, despite this, the proportion of wild catch in Australia represents just 0.002 per cent of production worldwide. We export $1.5 billion and import $2.5 billion worth of product, which makes Australia a net importer of fish product. Australian seafood only makes up 30 per cent of domestic supply. Our fishers operate to world's best practice. Of the 70 per cent of imported product, three countries make up the bulk of that figure: Thailand, 26 per cent; China, 14 per cent; and Vietnam, 12 per cent. In 2009, an estimation of adherence to the UN code of conduct put Australia fourth out of 53 countries. Vietnam was ranked 45th, Thailand was ranked 42nd and China was ranked 22nd.

Like many other industries in this country, Australian fishers operate to world's best practice. Queensland already has a massive area of its waters under protection, which in itself is not a bad thing. However, knowing that we can barely monitor and police the current no-go-zones, locking up more of our waters will only open the back door for illegal operators. We currently cannot control the number of people coming to Australia and we certainly cannot control illegal fishing in our northern waters, and probably other waters around Australia. Northern Australia is virtually: 'Look on—we can't do anything about it because we haven't got the manpower to control the reefs.' There are no species of fish in Queensland waters that are under threat and there was no need to increase the Coral Sea by 2.3 million square kilometres. There was no scientific evidence to support this closure.

**A government member:** Rubbish!
Mr O'DOWD: That is not rubbish, my friend. Read the facts. The Queensland LNP government have cut off a measly $200,000 from Sunfish, which is an industry based organisation and only has three per cent community membership. The minister has announced that the government will no longer fund bodies such as Sunfish and Suntag. The government was voted in by the Queensland people and they have had to cut costs. The Anna Bligh government ran the state into the ground and there had to be cutbacks somewhere.

Mr Neumann: Sacking people in your electorate—that is a good idea, is it?

Mr O'DOWD: Sacking the government was a good idea, I can tell you that. The people of Queensland have spoken and now Campbell Newman has the mandate to make these changes. In fact, everyone knows he has to in response to the appalling state of the Queensland economy. It is the worst of any state in Australia, including Tasmania. We are badly off. To anyone who lives in Queensland: if you do not know that, you do not know much.

Tony Burke is the single biggest threat to recreational fishers of Queensland. He did not listen to Sunfish or anyone else when he made his decisions on the extended marine park network. The Australian recreational fishing industry is the largest stakeholder affected by this lockout. These fishers are locked out forever—not for just one day, one month or one year—and there is no compensation as such. There is no compensation for on-land stakeholders either. I am talking about boat shops, tackle shops and the like, and they support the community and our economic base. Just two weeks ago, Mr Burke locked up another 2.3 million square kilometres to Australian fisheries. This is a disgrace. He we are, an island nation, and we are importing more than we are exporting. That in itself should tell you a story. We do not need any more interference into our fishing. It should be more like New Zealand who have a self managed industry and it works very well. We should listen to them a little bit more often in this particular case. It simply highlights that the Labor government has no desire to admit that their policies are hurting the Australian fishing industry, which are not based on any scientific evidence whatsoever. (Time expired)

Ms SAFFIN: In listening to the honourable member for Flynn speaking—can I say I like the honourable member for Flynn and he seems like a good fellow—how can it be a good idea to cut jobs in your own electorate? It is never a good idea no matter who does it. People can claim all sorts of mandates, but the fact is there is no mandate for the Queensland Premier to do it. I am speaking in support of this motion for a number of reasons. I live in the Northern Rivers. What can matter more than recreational fishing? Recreational fishing is huge Australia-wide. It is huge in my seat of Page. We have recreational fishers everywhere. Even if you were not able to make a decision on policy grounds, why would you go and put the axe through recreational fishing programs on political grounds alone? Equally, it is also an industry. It is a huge industry with a huge economic base in regional areas. That is an important point to focus on and remember. By cutting their programs, cutting money to them, it has an impact at a regional economic level and it does not make sense to do it.

Ms SAFFIN: (Page) (11:40): She comes from Ipswich.

Ms SAFFIN: Yes, I grew up in Ipswich as the honourable member for Blair said. I am in an area where I see all this happening just over the border. I have been watching all the things that Premier Campbell Newman has been doing by taking the axe to the public service, to services, to the community and to projects and programs that matter in the community. What can matter more than recreational fishing? Recreational fishing is huge Australia-wide. It is huge in my seat of Page. We have recreational fishers everywhere. Even if you were not able to make a decision on policy grounds, why would you go and put the axe through recreational fishing programs on political grounds alone? Equally, it is also an industry. It is a huge industry with a huge economic base in regional areas. That is an important point to focus on and remember. By cutting their programs, cutting money to them, it has an impact at a regional economic level and it does not make sense to do it.
In watching what is going on in Queensland, some of it was going on in New South Wales with Premier O'Farrell. But Premier Newman seems to have emboldened Premier O'Farrell even more. He has taken the axe to programs left, right and centre. Anything that is not bolted down is up for the axe. In my area alone we have had the issue of Grafton jail. It was to close and then they wound it down and nearly 100 jobs would go. Jobs are going in TAFE. There are billions of dollars going out of TAFE.

Honourable members interjecting—

Ms SAFFIN: Well, there is a jail and it provides a lot of jobs to local people. You cannot replicate those jobs easily and they have gone. There is the whole spin-off effect in the local area. Also the slasher is going through TAFE.

Government members interjecting—

Ms SAFFIN: It is a shame. People can say, 'We want smaller government.' But this is ridiculous. These are front line people who deliver services. The ambos have been affected too as well as the firies.

Honourable members interjecting—

Ms SAFFIN: Yes, the rural fire brigade as well as the fire service are all being affected. On Friday night in Lismore I opened a fine art exhibition at Lismore TAFE which was called 'Last Draw'. It was actually the last of its kind because the program that they run is also being axed. There were over 100 students there and some of them were from a whole range of backgrounds, and a lot of them end up with work. We have a huge creative industry in my area. It is an industry in its own right and it provides enormous economic benefits to the community. It is really short-sighted to put the axe through programs like this. There were over 100 students there from a whole range of diverse backgrounds. It has given some of them a whole new life. Some of them were in recovery. They have done this course. It has given them a place to belong; it has also given them skills that they can go out into the community and earn money with.

When I look at what is happening to recreational fishing in Queensland I look with alarm, and I realise what it has done to Sunfish Queensland Inc. I have read all of their statements and they say:
The Queensland Government fully supports recreational fishing in Queensland.

Then why is its first act to cut funding to voluntary community recreational projects?

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (11:45): I rise to speak on this motion with amazement. I cannot believe the barefaced cheek of the member for Capricornia in daring to point the finger at the Queensland government when, without doubt, the biggest threat to recreational fishing is the federal Labor government. It reminds me of the statement the member for Griffith, Kevin Rudd, made before the 2007 election. He said: 'The Howard government's reckless spending must stop.' Isn't that a joke! The Howard government inherited a $96 billion national government debt, which we turned into an unencumbered $20 billion surplus. In comparison, Labor turned the $20 billion surplus into a very greatly encumbered $150 billion black hole in considerably less than five years. Labor's mismanagement of the country has included live exports, the super trawler, pink batts et cetera, not to mention the mining tax, which is a new low even for them—a tax which ended up costing the government money.
For the Labor Party, the reality is irrelevant as long as you tell the public you are doing the right thing. The member for Capricornia's motion is surely an own goal. Labor and Minister Burke are clearly the bigger threats to recreational fishing. It was the member for Watson, as Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, who removed all funding from the recreational fishing peak body, Recfish, in 2010, an act that was surely revenge for Recfish's daring to question the minister and lobby against the minister to try to bring some common sense into this debate. It was Minister Burke as fisheries minister who refused to take phone calls over the government's decision to ban mako shark fishing in 2010. He hid. And it was Minister Burke as Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities who has locked up another 2.3 million square kilometres of Australia's oceans. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences socioeconomic analysis into the impact of this massive lockup of ocean did not even consider recreationalfishers. Recreational fishers, understandably, are not that happy with the federal government. There is no compensation for recreational fishers and the associated fishing industry, boat shops, tackle shops and the communities they support.

We are not just being critical. You may ask: what will we do? The coalition supports maritime protection that is based on peer reviewed science and developed in consultation with the community, and that clearly includes recreational fishers. We recognise that Australia's fisheries are amongst the best managed in the world. The coalition is committed to restoring balance and a future coalition government will appoint a science based panel to review all boundaries and all zones. The coalition has introduced a 'Making marine parks accountable' amendment to the EPBC Act into the parliament. This legislation requires the environment minister to commission an independent social and economic impact assessment before any proclamations are made, obtain independent peer reviewed scientific advice before making any proclamations and for this advice to be publicly available, and establish independent scientific reference panels and stakeholder advisory groups for each region to ensure rigorous decision making. The proclamation of many reserves will be disallowable, meaning it will be subject to the scrutiny of both houses of the Australian parliament. The coalition in opposition is doing what the government should be doing in government: implementing sound policy.

What has Labor really done for recreational fishers? It has ignored their phone calls. It has pitted stakeholder groups against one another—fishing against environment, even recreational fishing interests against commercial fishing interests. They have locked Aussies out of Australian oceans.

Honourable members interjecting—

They have completely removed funding from the recreational fishers' peak industry body in an act of revenge. They have failed to understand or even investigate the impact of marine parks on recreational fishers and the important economic contribution recreational fishing makes to coastal communities. They have pandered to the whims of green groups ahead of Australia's recreational fishing communities. They have changed the laws to suit their political purpose rather than sound science. Labor is no friend of recreational or any other fishers and this motion is a sham. (Time expired)

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:50): I rise in support of the member for Capricornia's wonderful motion to oppose the Queensland Liberal National Party government's gutting of Sunfish and funding for major recreational fishing programs. Sadly, it has only been six
months, but I am again rising in this place to oppose the Liberal National Party cuts occurring in Queensland, whether it be job cuts, cuts to programs such as the Queensland Literacy Awards, cuts to the TB clinic in Brisbane, cuts to breast screening, cuts to funding for taxi vouchers to people with disability, and I could go on.

I note there is an ongoing theme when I rise to speak about the Liberal National Party, which is always to do with cuts. On this particular occasion, obviously, it is to do with the LNP cuts to the recreational fishing programs. I did not hear the speeches from the member for Herbert or the member for Dawson. I did hear the member for Flynn and the member for Calare, and I note that for all four of those speakers—if I take my advice from the member from Blair—none of them actually said that Campbell Newman's decision to cut the funding for Sunfish was a good policy. None of them said that it is right. So all pressure rests on the member for Wright to stand up and defend this decision to cut jobs up the east coast of Queensland. I look forward to the member Wright, who is a good bloke and will obviously stand up and defend, because there was a damming silence from the member for Flynn when it came to supporting Campbell Newman's decision to cut. The member for Calare just went off on a frolic of his own, which was the same speech he has been giving for the last 20 years. It went straight back to 1996. That is the vision for the future. He goes straight to 1996, yet he is the modern face of the Liberal and National parties on that side of the chamber.

But let us look to the cuts to fishing in Queensland by the Newman government. To date they have: cut $8 million the Fisheries budget; cut 60 jobs from Fisheries Queensland with many of those jobs in Flynn out of the 14,000 jobs that were cut across departments; ceased funding to Sunfish Queensland, which is what this motion is all about; ceased the Fisheries observer program; ceased the industry development program for commercial and recreational fishing—

_Honourable members interjecting_

**Mr PERRETT:** So, you are telling the people in Flynn that fishery inspectors do not have real jobs. You are saying to the people in Sunfish Queensland that they do not have real jobs. Well, I hope that is some comfort for them when they go home to their wife, or their husband or their kids and say, 'Mum or Dad doesn't have a job. But it wasn't a real job, so it doesn't matter now. We don't have to pay a real mortgage anymore maybe.' That is a ridiculous statement. I hope you withdraw.

Further cuts include: ceasing the Fishcare volunteer program; ceasing operational activity for waterway barrier works construction; cutting all funding to the national Fisheries Research and Development Corporation; scaling back the freshwater fishing program—which, as someone from St George, I am particularly upset about—to focus on the Stocked Impoundment Permit Scheme, freshwater stocking policy, native fish scientific expertise and pest and noxious fish; restructuring of the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol to build capacity and expertise in priority regional locations—which I notice the member for Flynn actually touched on in his speech as being a bad thing. It is amazing to have those counterintuitive arguments in the one speech; not providing funding for the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation—a decision for this year only, with review in future years; the Marine Ecology Group, seagrass monitoring, transitioning across to James Cook University; and the rationalisation of Brisbane based senior management and support services.
The LNP has also cut front line fisheries researchers, as Minister McVeigh has confirmed in writing. So, it is not surprising to hear that the Liberal National Party has failed at the national level, given that the federal coalition failed to act in response to these state cuts. As I said, we did not hear a single voice raised in the parliament by the member for Herbert, the member for Dawson, the member for Flynn or the member for Calare. All hope is resting on the member for Wright about objecting to these cuts. I go back to the comment made by the member for Blair—these were not flagged before the election, they were not in campaign material that I saw in my mailbox. Campbell Newman's actions are just a sign of what would come if, heaven forbid, the member for Warringah became Prime Minister.

This is in stark contrast to the Gillard Labor government's strong commitment to deliver a national network of marine reserves to protect our precious marine environment for future generations. I was horrified when the very first thing that the Deputy Premier said after taking office was, 'We need to cut the size of the Great Barrier Reef.' Remember that? The very first thing that the Newman government said, 'We need to make the Great Barrier Reef area smaller.' The member for Flynn who has close connections to Gladstone should be ashamed of that. (Time expired)

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (11:57): No-one enjoys the emotional task of having to sack someone. No-one likes to be sacked. It is an undertaking that I have had to do, from time to time, being an employer with over 105 permanent staff and contractors. But there is a reason it gets done, and hopefully through the course of this overview I will share those views with you, from a Queensland perspective.

I would like to speak a little bit about the overview of Sunfish and what the state government of Queensland is doing to support Sunfish. Sunfish puts itself forward as the peak recreational fishing organisation in Queensland.; However, a recent state-wide survey of recreational fishers in Queensland found that only three per cent of recreational fishers, of which there are 21,000 in Queensland, were actually affiliated with the recreational fishing body. Expenditures on recreational fishing services for the 2012-13 budget in Queensland will still be in excess of $10 million for the year. They will be broken down to include compliance, surveillance and enforcement including boat ramp signage and community service announcements in excess of $3.2 million. In addition to that: communication and education programs, including a free handbook for recreational fishers of half a million dollars; fish stocks and recovery programs, pest fish education and marine habitat protection of $2 million; research monitoring and reporting activities of $2.8 million; and scientific assessment and policy development of $2 million. Campbell Newman and the state LNP team are not walking away. Yes, there are reductions and there are reductions because the state is running out of money—and I will come to that.

In the process of these monies and jobs being wound back not one person in Queensland, who enjoys taking their kids, or going out and having a recreational fish, will lose the right to go and have a fish. We have just had to pare back some of the funding across all sectors of the community. The recreational fishing user fee contributes about $4.4 billion, and for everyone in Queensland who owns a boat, part of their registration goes towards this service. These revenues continue to be allocated for the ongoing management of recreation fishing with 75 per cent of SIPS's monies returning directly to the regional fishing stocking groups. This spending demonstrates the government's continued commitment to recreational fishing, and
that is additional to the $10 million election commitment that will see this enhanced for the buybacks.

I mentioned earlier in my opening comments that I was going to allude to why some of these drastic measures are being undertaken. Recently, in Queensland we had a commission of audit report, which I will come to. There were three eminent persons who sat on that board. There was Professor Sandra Harding, Vice-Chancellor and President of James Cook University. She was educated at the Australian National University with 14 years of comprehensive experience. Mr Doug McTaggart brings strong leadership to the commission having held various senior positions in the private and public sectors. He is currently the Chairman for the Public Service Commission and a member of the Public Sector Renewal Board, a member of the COAG Reform Council, a councillor on the National Competition Council, and a director of Suncorp Ltd and UGL Ltd. These people are no dills when it comes to handling money. In addition to, that they had the honourable Peter Costello, who was the Treasurer for the Commonwealth for a record term. For more than a decade Peter Costello was governor of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. He was also a member of the committee of the International Monetary Fund and has been chairman of the OECD Ministerial Council and APEC financial ministers. He was involved in the establishment of the G20 after the Asian financial crisis and was the global chairman of the G20 in 2006. So you are making the assumption that some of those guys actually know a little bit about fiscal management.

Bear with me and listen to their damning report on the previous Labor government's fiscal management of that state and why today a motivated LNP government and Campbell Newman are having to make these tough decisions. It is disturbing to report that in recent years the government of Queensland embarked on unsustainable levels of spending which have jeopardised the financial position of the state. Queensland has moved from a position of considerable financial strength just six years ago to, today, a position of weakness. Campbell Newman has a tough job ahead of him and I applaud him. If you want to help out Campbell, pop up and thank him for the work that he is doing in Queensland. (Time expired)

Debate adjourned.

Viability of Rural Producers

Debate resumed on the motion by Ms Marino:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges:
   (a) the financial pressures faced by rural producers;
   (b) that farmer viability is the key to food production; and
   (c) that producer viability is primarily essential for long term food security;

(2) notes that return on capital rates in agriculture is far below that of other industries; and

(3) recognises that the Government's National Food Plan green paper completely fails to address producer viability.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (12:01): I rise to speak on a motion that I have moved. There has been much debate around the world about food security in recent years. This debate has centred mainly around the need to feed a world that is expected to contain nine billion people in a few decades time. In Australia the debate has mostly centred around
how our food producers can contribute to that global food demand. The level of debate and concern this year forced the government to develop and release the national food plan green paper. However, the paper, like the government, unfortunately is long on rhetoric but short on substance. It is a paper that demonstrates again no understanding of the problems facing food production and food producers in Australia.

The problem is not complex; it is simple market economics. If a business cannot make a profit then the business closes, and frequently that is what is happening to agriculture and food producers in Australia. On the land we need to make sure that every hectare counts, but many of those doing the work cannot make a living. According to the Western Australian Department of Agriculture, the broadacre region of Western Australia averaged a rate of return to capital of around two per cent over the period 1998 to 2002-03. In comparison, the business world usually works on a minimum acceptable rate of return, or the hurdle rate, of around 12 per cent. There is no doubt that the income drive from food production does not reflect in any way, shape or form the amount of investment required or the work or risk involved. Farm incomes compare poorly to the average Australian income, as demonstrated by the fact that farming families are overrepresented in incomes under $52,000 a year. Members should know that many farming families exist on the income equivalent of welfare incomes despite arduous and often dangerous working conditions. We take these people for granted and expect them to keep producing some of the best quality food and fibre in the world. This should be of significant and pressing concern to the government. But worse still is the number of farming families with a negative income.

So how does the government’s green paper demonstrate its understanding of these issues? Well, it does not. The government never puts the words ‘farmers’, ‘growers’ and ‘viability’ together in the 274 pages of the green paper—not once. There is no link even between farm viability and market access in that paper. Nor does it mention rising costs of production, nor farm-gate price, nor return on capital. These are core issues for those in the food production sector. It has one mention of return on investment, but that is in relation to production in other nations. The carbon price is mentioned six times, but it is never mentioned as an additional cost of production for farmers. I read in recent weeks that the managing director of Coles visited Perth to try to mend some of the bridges the company has burned with our farmers and farm producers. The coverage quoted Mr McLeod as saying: ‘In the last four years we have seen food deflation for the first time and that is because we are working with suppliers at becoming efficient.’ As a farmer said to me on Saturday night, what this actually means is that Coles is working at driving down prices for our suppliers, meaning food producers are looking at further cuts. It strikes me as odd that a man the newspaper has said has earned more than $43 million in salary and bonuses in last four years, which apparently included $15 million last year, appears to be so strongly opposed to farmers making a commercial return. I look at the cuts the government has made to research and development which aims to improve the productivity of farmers, to assist them in continuing to improve their productivity. Improving productivity is the key to what farmers need to do. Cuts that the government has made in a range of core programs certainly do not help food producers in this country. Year upon year, productivity of our farmers has been 2.8 per cent compounding, but in recent times it is back to one per cent. This is why the R&D component is so important, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am very concerned about the viability of farmers, as are those who speak to me on a regular basis. I would encourage other members in this place to get out and actually talk to
those doing the work, those who have no capacity to pass on the additional costs of production such as those through the carbon tax, for one example, red tape and green tape. Every cent that adds to growers' costs of production means they are less likely to be able to produce the food and fibre we need into the future.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon—Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (12:06): We all know there are sections in the Australian economy that are under great strain, particularly due to issues like the high Australian dollar and increased imports. I do not need to remind members here that the agricultural community is far from immune to these forces. This includes sectors like the processing and fresh vegetable sector, which has a big presence in my electorate. To assess where we are and discuss options for the future, the Australian government is well on the way to delivering the nation's first ever national food plan. This is a commitment that we made at the last election. Following the release of the national food plan green paper by Minister Ludwig on 17 July, extensive stakeholder consultation has been undertaken and continues at this very moment. Feedback from this process is being used to inform the development of the national food plan, which will be released as a white paper in 2013.

The green paper is a discussion document intended to seek the community's views, to stimulate debate and launch the second part of the government's consultation process to develop the plan. The first part was the issue paper released in June 2011. Contrary to the assertions made by the member for Forrest in this motion, the green paper does address producer viability and outlines how current policy addresses issues affecting the food system including agricultural productivity, market access and skills and development. It also discusses potential changes the government may consider to policy programs and governance arrangements. The national food plan green paper sought feedback on a number of possible policy options in relation to improving producer viability, including increasing public expenditure on rural research and development, R&D, over the next 10 years, improving the rural research and development corporation model to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency, which we can do, ways government and business can expand food trade opportunities particularly with Asia, and an industry led working group to prepare a workforce development strategy focusing on ways to better use existing labour and skills initiatives in the agricultural sector.

The government is developing a national food plan to ensure its policies support its vision for a food system where Australians continue to enjoy a sustainable, globally competitive, resilient food supply that supports access to nutritious and affordable food. It is an important step to ensure a more integrated, coordinated and strategic focus to food related policy along the supply chain. The national food plan will link and complement the recently released R&D policy statement and the Australia in the Asian Century white paper.

In addition to the food plan, the government has released the Australia in the Asian Century white paper, which includes a national objective for Australian agriculture and food, and a case study showcasing the significant opportunities for the sector. I draw your attention to chapter 7 of that paper. The national objective outlines the vision for the agricultural and food sector and identifies pathways that will be taken to position Australia to meet the growing demand for food and capture the opportunities of the Asian century. Global food demand is expected to rise by over 30 per cent by 2025, with most demand coming from Asia.
Our agriculture and food sector is extraordinarily well-placed to build on its strengths and to capture a healthy share of these growing markets, despite fierce competition. The white paper outlines how Australia can make the most of these opportunities through lifting productivity, enhancing capabilities, securing better access to markets—that in particular is crucial—having a shared interest in food security and building relationships in the region, again, is absolutely essential. Australia can build a food and production system that is globally competitive with productive and sustainable agriculture and food businesses, and a reputation as a reliable supply of safe, high quality food, agricultural products, services and technology to Asia. It also emphasises the importance of leadership and strong policy frameworks.

Productivity growth has been a main driver of the profitability of Australian agriculture and future productivity growth will be a key determinant of future income growth. Productivity growth in Australian agriculture over 25 years to 2011 has been about three per cent per year compared to one per cent across the market sector overall. R&D plays a vital role in supporting productivity growth in Australian agriculture, and the government's matching contributions are a key factor in leveraging industry contributions. We are a strong supporter of R&D; investing in the order of $700 million a year for rural R&D through cooperative research centres, the CSIRO, universities, RDCs and many other programs.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (12:11): I would like to take the opportunity today to try to show why the agricultural sector is still such an important part of the Australian economy; the huge contribution rural Australia makes to our wealth; and yet, despite incredible productivity increases, the difficulties that many farmers and farming communities find themselves in. We are used to hearing the debates concerning our nation's productivity and, when discussing our agricultural output, a number of different figures are used. For instance, should we consider the productivity per hectare, per hectare sown, or per capita? Whichever it is, agriculture is impressive, but most particularly so on a per capita basis.

I will take the wheat industry, for example. In 1920, 2.6 million hectares were sown and 1.2 million tonnes were harvested. In 1950, it was 4.9 million hectares sown for 5.9 million tonnes harvested. By 1980, it was 11 million hectares producing 16 million tonnes of grain. By 2010, it was 13.8 million hectares producing 21.8 million tonnes of wheat. Over the last 60 years, from 1950 to 2010, there has been a 300 per cent increase in the value of that crop in today's dollars—from $1.7 billion in 1950 up to $6.5 billion now. Very few industries could boast such growth.

I could supply the same for almost any agricultural product but, in a nutshell, total agricultural production in Australia is around $48 billion and, after value adding and processing, this rises to $192 billion a year, 60 per cent of which is exported—or around one third of our total exports. Export dollars are the ones that pay our bills in the world. They are the hard currency which underwrites our standard of living. With the agricultural sector providing a third of that income, its value to every Australian should not be underestimated.

However, at the same time that this miraculous increase in production and productivity has occurred, many of our rural communities have shrunk. Some have disappeared altogether. In fact, these communities are the victims of the productivity increases that have been demanded by the sector, and it is not likely to stop. Every year, farmers produce more product with fewer people because they have to. In 1920, the population of Australia was 58 per cent non-metro and 32 per cent rural. By 2010, 38 per cent of our population are non-metro and only 13
per cent now live in rural communities, yet this sector produces one third of our export wealth.

It is plainly obvious that a significant part of Australia's economic success rides on our strong agricultural sector, and while I hear many worry about food security in Australia, I am not so sure that this is cause for great concern. Simply, when we and the world want to pay enough for food, then we will produce more. That is not what happens in our marketing arrangements. In fact, the growers are pushed down to the bottom of the line. The hollowing out of the sector—often accompanied by a loss of dynamism within our communities—will ultimately hamper the sector's ability to respond to those demands and the great opportunities that will present themselves in a world population approaching nine billion—that is going to be one of the nation's biggest opportunities. The production of food is one of Australia's greatest strengths and opportunities, and it is worth noting that Australia has one of the lowest levels of government support for agriculture in the developed world. Subsidies are often hard to identify and come in various guises, including direct subsidies, tariffs, quotas and trade barriers disguised as something else. Our biggest agricultural competitor, the United States, pumps around $20 billion a year in direct subsidies into US agriculture, plus it imposes stringent import quotas to a range of products, including beef and sugar. The EU spends 57 billion euros a year on agriculture. In comparison, Australian agriculture has very little support notwithstanding the recent emergency exceptional circumstances arrangements during the drought. Traditionally, a modest amount of government support has come in the form of research subsidies, and it is easily argued that the net recipients of this important funding are the general public.

It is a great concern, however, that agricultural programs across the nation have been wound back. Over the last five years the federal government has abolished CSIRO Land and Water, and has cut tens of millions from agricultural research, including from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. At the same time, collectively, those opposite make grand announcements about feel-good targets of greatly increased production and profitability in a sector with absolutely no plan of consequence or any idea how to achieve these targets. The states are no better. The state plan in South Australia calls for an increase of $20 billion by 2020 with no plan to get there. Time expired.

Mr LYONS (Bass) (12:16): My interest in rural communities is in my electorate of Bass, and the fantastic work that is being done, largely by the Australian government in irrigation schemes, is making and will make a significant difference to the producers in my electorate. I have been at, and participated in, the recent opening of the Winnaleah Irrigation Augmentation Scheme and the Headquarters Road Dam Irrigation Scheme in my electorate.

I have some reservations about the rural communities, and I know that it comes down to education because I have spoken to several farmers about the proposed approval by the Tasmanian government to import poppy straw to one of the poppy processors in Tasmania that looks like getting up. I have spoken to these irrigation schemes about farmers diversifying. In that north-east area of Tasmania they largely produce milk. It has fantastic soils for growing grass, but if we are going to put irrigation schemes in they need to multiply the value of that land. I said to them that it would be really good if you could diversify and do a bit more poppy growing—and I know some do, and they do a fantastic job—but I spoke to one farmer from Scottsdale and he said to me: 'I'm sort of 63, 64. I don't really know that I
want to go into poppies. I'd rather just run beef cattle, have a fairly easy life and work my way into retirement.' This is a problem in our rural communities. We have an ageing workforce, and it would be fantastic if we could be really innovative, and get into those new crops. And what a place Tasmania is for those innovations.

One of our local producers in Scottsdale is doing a fantastic job producing rhubarb for Australia—fantastic. One of the innovations coming out of that rhubarb crop that they are producing in Tasmania is a thing called 'Rhu Bru'. What they are doing is taking the waste from the rhubarb and making a fantastic drink, and if you have not had one of these refreshing drinks, then you should get Rhu Bru, produced in Scottsdale. It is fantastic. It is one of the most refreshing drinks you could ever hope to get.

An honourable member: I am not sure it will replace orange juice.

Mr LYONS: This is an innovation—I think Rhu Bru is better than orange juice and I am quite happy to bring some bottles of Rhu Bru up here to deliver to every member of parliament because it is just such a fantastic, refreshing drink. Rhu Bru is one of the innovations—this is where we need to be in Tasmania with these great irrigation schemes that we are putting in. We also need to maintain our great production of dairy products in our area. It is a pity that we have not got any processors in North-east Tasmania; we send most of our product to the north-west coast and that is produced into various cheeses and all sorts of wonderful dairy products coming out of Tasmania—fantastic. We have to look after the member for Braddon because that is his electorate. The federal government has been a great supporter of those producers both in the Smithton area and in Burnie—fantastic support that the government has given for those dairy products many of which are produced in the north-east.

I really wanted to talk about the Tasmanian exports and the difficulty we have had with the Victorian government imposing a $75 million penalty on Tasmania—it is a real tragedy that the Victorian government is putting that tax on Tasmanian exporters. Exports from Tasmania now probably cost about $3½ thousand per container to get out of Tasmania, whereas once it was about $1,300. This has made a tremendous difference to our rural producers, and we do need to find a solution for Tasmania's export freight industry. We do need to find a long-term, viable solution. All I can say is: food and wine in Tasmania has the most sensational potential of anywhere in Australia, and if you have not tried Tasmanian wines and Tasmanian cheeses, you have really missed out. And I promise to bring every member of parliament a Rhu Bru.

(Time expired)

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (12:21): The electorate of Flynn does carry a lot of rural products, farmers and people trying to make money off the land. I would not say that dairy farmers are a dying race, but there are a lot of dairy farmers dropping out of the industry. The thing with Australian dairy farmers is that we know Victoria produces the most milk and we produce about nine billion litres of milk a year, with four billion used locally for Australian consumption and the rest being exported overseas. This is the problem dairy farmers have in my area, as with dairy farmers in New South Wales. In my electorate, there are only 29 dairy farmers left, and they produce about a million litres of milk per year per farmer. That milk is processed in the Port Curtis Dairy Co-op in Rockhampton. There is going to come a point in time when that 29 million litres of milk is no longer viable to go through that PCD plant. So what happens then to those 29 farmers? They are currently having their contracts drawn up
again. They have been getting about 60c a litre for the primary milk and about 16c for the class 2 milk. This is hardly making it viable, and with the new contracts they face through their processors, Parmalat and so forth, they do not think the industry will be viable for a very long time. Two have closed down in the last two weeks.

When I come to citrus farmers, we have the biggest mandarin citrus farm in the Southern Hemisphere at Emerald; it is called the 2PH farms. These guys are struggling because of the high Australian dollar. All their mandarins are exported to Europe, America and South America. They produce a lot of mandarins and they could not survive without hiring the South Pacific labourers from places like Samoa and Fiji. This scheme is very good for them because in Emerald, which is strong in mining and other agricultural areas, they cannot get workers for their citrus farms. So they employ these South Pacific islanders who do a very good job and who are very good community people. They come in, they are allowed seven months to stop and work on the citrus farms and then go back to their homeland. With the citrus farms come big cold rooms and big chillers and they have been hit by the carbon tax, which is making them buckle at the knees. I will be fighting for those farmers. The dairy farmers also suffer from this high carbon tax levy. Wheat farmers are getting about $320 or $280 a tonne; it fluctuates. When I was at Emerald in 1980 they were getting $200 a tonne then, so the wheat price has not gone up a lot but their overhead costs have gone up alarmingly since 1980. The price of machinery has gone up and everything has gone up. For farmers generally their product prices have not gone up.

The beef producers have got much better, as have all our Australian rural producers. They have had to get better or they do not survive. We have ginger farmers in Bundaberg who are going along okay but face the threat of imported ginger from Fiji. As we know, ginger in Fiji has a disease, so we have to be careful with our biosecurity. The product has got to be properly quarantined because one thing we do not want is to have this disease sweep through our ginger farms at Bundaberg. There are macadamia nuts. The wine producing areas of Central Queensland are not big but they still produce wine. Cotton is a very expensive crop to grow but offers good returns if everything goes okay. In the 2008 floods and the 2010 floods in Flynn all the cotton farms were wiped out and it was heartbreaking to see the cotton modules underwater and sucking it up like a big sponge.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (12:26): I thank the chamber for its cooperation in allowing me to speak at this time. It was a very early start getting here from rural Victoria this morning. I appreciate it and thank the chamber for being lenient in that regard. I start by congratulating Nola Marino, the member for Forrest, for this wonderful motion. It is a fantastic motion and one that all members of this House should take particular note of. Our rural producers are hurting. From what we have heard today, I think it is true right across the country, whether it be from the member for Forrest's electorate in Western Australia, whether it be from New South Wales, whether it be from Queensland or whether it be from the Northern Territory or the Deputy Speaker's own home state of Tasmania. All the feedback and information I am getting at the moment is that it is very hard for our farmers to make a living.

There are three issues on which I think we as federal parliamentarians can make immediate steps to address the problem. This should go to the heart of this motion by the member for Forrest. The first issue is that we have to put downward pressure on interest rates so that we put downward pressure on the dollar. What is the best way we can do that? We have had the
four biggest budget deficits in Australia's history in the last four years. We have to get our budget under control because if we get our budget under control it means the Reserve Bank can bring interest rates down so that internationally they are comparable and we will not see money coming into this country and keeping the dollar as high as it is. We have to put downward pressure on the dollar, and as federal parliamentarians what is the best way we can do it? The best way is to end wasteful Wayne's reckless spending. That is the first thing we have to do. The second thing we have to do is get rid of the carbon tax. Whether we like it or not, it has to go to help our farmers. I will give you a couple of examples. In the dairy industry this year alone, on the government's own modelling, each dairy farmer will have a minimum of a $5,000 hit to their bottom line. If you talk to the dairy farmers in my electorate—some of which are larger producers—you are looking at that being $10,000, $15,000 or $20,000 in some instances. In the south-west community, if you take $5,000 income from every dairy farmer, you are taking it off the towns and communities in the electorate as well. We are starting to see it.

The service businesses to our agricultural sector are hurting because the extra money that farmers would spend in local communities is not occurring. When did that start? It happened post-30 June, with the implementation of the carbon tax. Talk to the Murray-Goulburn or talk to Fonterra. The direct hit from the carbon tax on them is bigger. What has happened to their international competitors? They are not being hit by it. We have two issues to start with.

The third issue that we need to address is access to overseas markets. We have to make sure that our farmers can sell their produce and that they can sell it as efficiently and effectively as possible. We have to double our efforts to bring down the tariffs, bring down the duties and bring down the trade barriers behind the border which impact on our agricultural exports. They are the three areas where we as federal parliamentarians can make an immediate impact to help our local farmers.

The message of this excellent motion by the member for Forrest is that farmers are hurting. Our regional and rural communities are suffering. We need to take action and there are three quick ways we can do that. Let's hope that the government is listening and has heard the message of this motion: get rid of the carbon tax, drive the dollar down through stopping the reckless spending, and get us increased access to overseas markets.

Debate adjourned.

**Battle of Eureka**

Debate resumed on the motion by Dr Leigh:

That this House:

(1) recognises that:

(a) the Battle of Eureka:

(i) was a key moment in Australian democracy;

(ii) called for basic democratic rights, including broadening the franchise and removing the property qualification to stand for the Legislative Council;

(iii) inspired subsequent movements in Australian history, including female suffrage and the Australian Republican Movement; and

(iv) demanded changes to make mining taxation more equitable, with the revenue to be spent on improvements to local infrastructure; and
(b) the importance of the Battle of Eureka is to be commemorated by the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka in Ballarat, partly funded by the Australian Government in recognition of its national significance; and

(2) encourages all Australians to remember and respect the Battle of Eureka by:

(a) visiting the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka to learn about the history of the Battle of Eureka and its effect on modern democracy; and

(b) flying the Eureka Flag on 3 December each year in its memory.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (12:32): Three hours after midnight on the Sabbath morning of Sunday, 3 December 1854, a winter and spring of discontent erupted in a short and dirty skirmish atop the gold-led diggings known as Eureka on the western outskirts of the Victorian town of Ballarat. The colonial authorities had sent troops from two British regiments, supported by the Victoria police—296 men, all told, against a tottering stockade defended by some 150 miners of the Ballarat Reform League. The miners protected a hand-sewn flag bearing a design of the Southern Cross, beneath which they had each sworn an oath ‘to stand truly by each other, to fight to defend our rights and liberties’. The bloody scrum described as the battle for Eureka lasted for fewer than 15 minutes. Six men of the colonial forces and 22 miners were killed. One hundred and fourteen of their Reform League comrades were imprisoned in the Ballarat lock-up and the flag was torn down. In the following months, 13 miners charged by the state with high treason were unanimously acquitted by citizen juries. All bar one of the political demands of the Ballarat Reform League were granted within 12 months. The first bill for the universal enfranchisement of men in the Australian colonies was passed by the Victorian Legislative Council in 1857.

Today I have pleasure in welcoming to the House John Moloney and Richard O'Brien from the ACT branch of Eureka's Children. Eureka's Children fosters the memory of Eureka and the principle of Australian democracy. I thank Mr Maloney for his recent reminder that the battle for Eureka is now an indelible part of the Australian narrative. It ignited the struggle for Australian female suffrage and continues to inspire the Australian Republican movement. The accusing memories of Pemulwuy and Yagan bear witness that this was not the first time in Australia colonial history that a rebellion had been led in defence of a people. The smug orchestrators of the Rum Rebellion proceeded and succeeded in their coup d'etat, while the dead convicts at Castle Hill can attest to the first revolt of white men against the wickedness of colonial authorities.

The Eureka protesters were mostly not Australian citizens as we understand the concept. Only two of them can be said to have been Australian-born. Black and white Americans, Jamaicans, Italians, Swedes, Scots, Jews, Dutch, French and Germans participated in the Eureka protest, with Asian Australians being the only conspicuous absence. But, like the convicts at Castle Hill, the overwhelming majority of miners at Eureka were Irish. They were led by Irishman Peter Lalor and were easily motivated by Irish distrust of English overlords. Yet, out of the gun smoke and mist, the story that emerges does make the battle for Eureka unique in Australian history, a story that cannot be found in any paragraph before or since, a story that was and is an outstanding flare in our democratic consciousness. Until that summer dawn in 1854, no Australian political movement had claimed or defended the democratic freedoms that we today, in this House, understand as the self-evident bedrock of our society.
A month before the battle, 10,000 miners had assembled on Bakery Hill and voted into existence the Ballarat Reform League. The league immediately passed a resolution and with it vaulted across an Australian political Rubicon. The resolution declared, ‘It is the inalienable right of every citizen to have a voice in making the laws he is called upon to obey, that taxation without representation is tyranny’—the first explicit demand of Australia’s unfranchised for the rights of political recognition and the responsibilities of political representation. The founding resolution was swiftly developed into a charter calling for full and fair political representation based on universal male suffrage, an end to the property qualification for members of the Victorian Legislative Council, so vigorously defended by the conservative forces, salaried members of parliament, voting by secret ballot, and a shorter parliamentary term. In Australia's short history that charter is unique, the original affirmation of the democratic expectations of an Australian citizen. I acknowledge the work of Taimus Werner-Gibbings, who has assisted me with this speech, the advocacy of Peter FitzSimons in his excellent book on Eureka, and my co-authors David Madden, Macgregor Duncan and Peter Tynan, with whom I co-authored a book called *Imagining Australia*, which featured the Eureka flag on the cover.

Deputy Speaker, I hope this debate will be bipartisan. Robert Menzies said that Eureka was ‘an earnest attempt at democratic government’. He repeatedly wove Eureka into his speeches and we should all be proud of the Eureka story. *(Time expired)*

**Mr McCormack** (Riverina) *(12:37)*: It is important, indeed imperative, that Australian history be an integral part of Australian secondary schooling. Thankfully, the coalition when in government under John Howard recognised this as a fundamental part of the curriculum. The former prime minister had attacked the teaching of Australian history in schools, saying that ‘too often history has succumbed to a post-modern culture of relativism where any objective record of achievement is questioned or repudiated’. He was right, of course. We went through a period of political correctness under the Hawke and Keating Labor governments and unfortunately we are experiencing a new wave of this under the present administration such that no-one, certainly in this place, is quite sure if they can or cannot say anything about anyone.

This motion is about the 1854 Battle of Eureka, which as the member for Fraser correctly notes, was a key moment in Australian democracy. I concur with his encouragement to all Australians to visit the Museum of Australian Democracy at Ballarat to learn about the history of the 3 December battle. In fact, on this very day, Principal Danny Malone is taking the year 6 pupils of Mater Dei Catholic primary school of Wagga Wagga for the school's annual excursion to Ballarat to do just that.

The battle of the Eureka stockade was an organised rebellion of gold miners at Ballarat pitted against the British colonial authority. The most significant conflict in the colonial history of Victoria, it resulted in the deaths of 22 miners and six soldiers. Irish born Peter Lalor played a leading role in the Eureka rebellion. He led the miners' opposition towards often brutal administration of the goldfields. His left arm was seriously wounded in the battle, requiring amputation. Lalor was later elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly, the first outlaw to make it to parliament. His name lives on in the Victorian federal seat currently held by the Prime Minister. The Eureka flag, designed by a Canadian miner, Captain Henry Ross, includes the Southern Cross on a blue field. It is now a symbol of unionism. A similar flag...
was flown prominently above the Barcaldine camp of the 1891 Australian shearsers' strike, and therefore has had a strong association with the Australian labour movement from this time. Construction unions, such as the Builders Labourers Federation in particular, adopted the Eureka flag and it is one of the flags flying permanently above the Melbourne Trades Hall. No doubt, if Tony Abbott forms a government after next year's election, the Eureka flag will be flown often at the protests which will undoubtedly follow as unionists rally workers against the coalition's policies. The Eureka flag was put up on that day of infamy on 19 August 1996 when a union protest, one of the leaders of which was none other than the current Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, degenerated into the violent and bloody Canberra Riot. Protesters broke away from a rally organised by the Australian Council of Trade Unions and broke down the doors of parliament, trashing the gift shop and injuring police. The Canberra Times reported the following day:

Impertinent but agile protesters climbed up and across the holy marble parapet of the Great Verandah in front of the building and hung their flags and banners there. Eureka and Aboriginal flags even hung across the astonished kangaroo and emu of the nation's sacred, stainless steel coat of arms.

That is the use of the Eureka flag; used by the unions, flown proudly by the unions.

The other side today acknowledges and celebrates ordinary people rising up against the establishment. That is correct. It exalts these people. The most downtrodden group in Australia at the moment are farmers, in particular, irrigators. You can scoff all you like but we have a modern day Peter Lalor of sorts in Griffith farmer John Bonetti, who is dead against the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Now he is quoted in the Area News newspaper at Griffith saying that he is one of many who said that the community would continue to take.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lyons): This is a motion about Eureka, is it?

Mr McCormack: Yes, it is. I am talking about the Eureka flag. I am talking about modern day protests. I am talking about how that side exalts in people who rise up against the establishment, rise up against things that they feel reflect poor policy being enacted by this government. Let me tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is just that, and Mr Bonetti declared he would lead a whole set of protests if his fellow farmers agreed to support him.

We will not accept the plan if it is not right for us … I'm basically a law-abiding person but this ridiculous. We will take a militant stand against this if we need to.

I am sure that the good farmers of Griffith will not be as bad as the unions were in 1996. I will just finish with the words of Mark Twain who said, in talking about the Eureka Stockade:

…I think it may be called the finest thing in Australasian history. It was a revolution—small in size; but great politically; it was a strike for liberty, a struggle for principle, a stand against injustice and oppression…

I am sure that the other members of the house would agree with Mark Twain's sentiments on that score.

Mr Champion (Wakefield) (12:42): It is hard to follow the member for Riverina. I was getting a bit lost there, but the point he makes is essentially right. The struggle at Eureka meant that people up in the Riverland could burn the plan and politically protest and express their views on the laws that we write in this place. That is exactly the principles that we are defending and that were defended at Eureka. There is no doubt it was as celebration of
democracy and there is no doubt it was a celebration of Australian values—justice, liberty, democracy and mateship. These are the same values that have echoed down the generations and the same values that we have defended on battlefields around the world. It is an interesting point the Peter Lalor, his grandson—also Peter Lalor—died at Gallipoli defending those values. There is no doubt that the events and symbols of Eureka have had a long association with the labour movement. Ben Chifley said that Eureka was more than an incident or passing phase. It was greater in significance than the short-loved revolt against tyrannical authority would suggest. The permanency of Eureka in its impact on our development was that it was the first real affirmation of our determination to be masters of our own political destiny.

Even John Howard said that the events of Eureka, 150 years ago, played a part in the development of Australia. He must have said that through gritted teeth, I think, but as the member for Fraser, who has brought this motion to the House, pointed out, Prime Minister Menzies was far more generous to Eureka and to the diggers there, and far kinder to that struggle and its role in the development of Australia than other conservative leaders. Indeed, it would be my hope that Eureka becomes a far more bipartisan thing and that the symbols of Eureka become far more bipartisan. In my own electorate, when the Central Districts footy club play footy, you can see the Union Jack, the flag of Australia and the Eureka flag, all flown at the same time while a flare is set off. These are not necessarily bipartisan symbols, and they are not necessarily exclusive signals. They sit alongside all of the other symbols that Australia has.

If we look back—talking about justice, liberty, democracy and mateship and all of those values that were present there on Bakery Hill—we also have to look at the other side and what their motivations were. Commissioner Robert Rede, in his letter of Saturday afternoon 2 December 1854, said:

… I am convinced that … the future … of the Colony … depends on the crushing of this movement in such a manner that it may act as a warning. I should be sorry to see them return to their work … we may be able to crush the democratic agitation at one blow which can only be done if we find them with arms in their hands and acting in direct opposition to the laws …

You can see there that the motivations of the Establishment at that time were to smash the democratic ideals of those miners, to smash the democratic ideals of those people who made all those important pledges. I think, as I said before, that we do need to have a more bipartisan attitude to Eureka; it should be something that is celebrated because it was the rejection of the maladministration of justice, licence hunts and the jailing of journalists for seditious libel. It was the rejection of 13 stockaders being put on trial—including John Joseph, an African-American who was first put on trial—and their freedom by juries. We should look at taking that oath that was sworn by the diggers:

We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties. We should be looking at having that oath in our citizenship ceremonies and in our other oaths because it is a historic echo of this nation's character, this nation's struggle for democracy and this nation's preservation of democracy. That is not something that any one party owns. That is something that every Australian owns, and it has been defended up hill and down dale, and we should not be shy about defending it in this place either.
Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (12:47): I commend the member for Fraser for his introduction of this most important motion, the contribution made by the member for Riverina, which was interesting, and the one by the member for Wakefield, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Having said that and having heard the contributions and the outline of the motion that is before us, I applaud the sentiment that is in that motion, because, as the member for Wakefield says, he talked about character, what formed the Australian character, why we are like we are—and we are accordingly a little different, especially when it comes to authority—but let us not go there too far today, especially in this week for me.

I would put to you, Deputy Speaker, that for me this is about one man, one flag, one arrest and one spirit. The one man was Peter Lalor; he stood in that meeting and said, 'I will lead'. He did not say, 'Pick me, pick me', he said, 'I will lead.' He was the only voice that stood in the meeting and said, 'I will lead.' This Irishman stood up and said to this group of Australians who were being oppressed by the authorities, 'I will lead.' One man. One unique flag under the Southern Cross. One unique flag where they looked to the sky for their future, and it was the Southern Cross displayed on that flag that they were to come behind. One arrest. Who did they arrest? This is the best part of the whole story: they arrested the journalist; they arrested the local editor. Nobody else was jailed or arrested over this whole episode. Lalor, though damaged with his arm smashed to pieces and later taken off, was not arrested and eventually became a member of the Legislative Council. Isn't that just greatest story? Who did the authorities have a go at? They booked the journalists for—what was it?—seditious libel. Most of our journalists would be in jail and we would not have newspapers today if that were the case, especially with regard to the Prime Minister at the moment. But let's not go there! But can we be candid about the moment and also interested in the past? Yes, we can, because what happens today in Australia emanates from what happened then. If we had some of their principles and pride and we took the same pride and care in any allegation that is made towards people in leadership, perhaps there would be a lot less said in this place and in newspapers about our national leadership than is said today.

But then I add a caveat at the end, and the caveat at the end is one spirit. What has not been mentioned here today—although the member for Wakefield went very close to it—is the spirit of this nation that was born out of not just this one incident but also many incidents like it. But this was a turning point that said, 'We are Australians and we will not be oppressed.' What did Lalor say when he stood up and took that lead? What was the one word he used when he stood up? What was the first word he said? Yes, there was a small speech, but he said one word. That amazing one word was 'liberty'. He did not stand up and say, 'I will do the job. Excuse me; I will do it.' He stood up and he said, 'Liberty.'

In the national consciousness, that word acquitted with his name made the difference at that time. Whether they were victorious was a typical Australian story. No, they failed. But they did not fail in spirit, because of the spirit they had created amongst the 500. The disastrous consequences for those around them and the revenge that was taken by the authorities was outrageous. So they lost on all accounts. They lost life and they lost and lost and lost. But, out of that loss, was born the spirit that we live with today that makes us the unique country that we are.

Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing) (12:52): This debate itself has exemplified
the grand passions that the Eureka Stockade engenders. I so delighted that this debate has
been brought before this chamber and that we are continuing to have these very, very
passionate discussions about what is, in my view, at the heart of our democratic tradition.

We live in one of the world's greatest democracies. We live in a state with transparent and
fair elections and our voices are heard through our parliaments and our community leaders,
and now, more than ever, Australians are speaking out through the use of technology such as
social media. As a nation, we well and truly do our bit. We pay our taxes, we work hard and
we have a say in the future of our children and our children's children. That has not always
been the case. Many of the world's finest democracies have in the past not allowed even the
most basic of rights—from slavery and segregation to the right of all people to vote. Each has
had their own move to democracy, and it is important that we celebrate and recognise our
own: the battle of the Eureka Stockade.

On 3 December 1854, our nation experienced one of the most defining moments in our
journey towards our democratic tradition. It was with great significance that the Ballarat
Reform League Charter was placed onto the Australian Memory of the World Register back
in 2004. Three weeks prior to the battle at the Eureka Stockade, 10,000 miners gathered at
Bakery Hill and supported this charter. It is one of the most significant documents in our
nation's history. The miners represented by the Ballarat Reform League wanted a say in how
they were to be governed, how their taxes should be spent and how they as people deserved to
be treated. Its stated premise was:

It is the inalienable right of every citizen to have a voice in making the laws he is called on to obey—
that taxation without representation is tyranny.

The story of Eureka represents our nation's ability to overcome the struggles which we have
faced over the last two centuries. The battle that occurred back in 1854 was the most
significant turning point in our journey towards democracy. The federal government is
committed to ensuring that the role of the events of the Eureka Stockade, the movement
leading up to it and the events that followed it are very much central to our understanding of
our democratic history. Under the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure program, we
have committed some $5 million to establishing the Museum of Australian Democracy at
Eureka. The project is to be opened next year and I really want to urge every Australian to
visit this very important centre in Ballarat. It should be seen as a prerequisite to developing a
full understanding of the significance of the Eureka Stockade in the formulation of our
democratic society.

The Eureka Flag will be moved on loan—for two years initially, with a review—to the new
centre when the facility is complete. Those of us who have been involved in this debate for a
long period of time know the incredible significance of that. It follows an agreement between
the board of the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery and the Museum of Australian Democracy at
Eureka to move the flag from the art gallery on loan. It is a very significant thing for them to
have done, and I want to acknowledge the leadership of the board of the Ballarat Fine Art
Gallery in this regard. The Eureka Flag was gifted to the city of Ballarat by the Trooper King
family—no relation to mine—and it has been with the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery for a long
period of time and they have done an extraordinary job in curating and looking after what is, I
think, one of Australia's finest and most important national icons. I know that the board of the
art gallery did not take the decision lightly and that it was a very difficult one for them to
make. I want to give them my full support and say thank you as a grateful nation for making that decision. I think that was the right decision to have been made.

This month, we have also seen the release of another addition to the history of Eureka with Peter FitzSimon's book, and I am very much looking forward to reading it. I understand, from all accounts, it is a very good account of the history of the Battle of Eureka. This book joins the many others—and I notice that we have John here as well—on this very, very important issue, that have documented the historic events in the Ballarat goldfields back in the mid-1800s.

I commend the member for Fraser for presenting this motion to the House. It is a very fitting recognition of this bloody battle at the Eureka Stockade that it will be remembered always as a pivotal point in our nation's history and also very much part of this nation's understanding of itself. For those of us who live in Ballarat, we are very proud to have been the site where this occurred, but also the site where we have held the tradition and continue to make sure that tradition is brought to the Australian public. Again, I urge all members and senators of this parliament to come to Ballarat—you will be most welcome—and have the opportunity to visit the Eureka Flag in the new Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka and respect those who fought for our right for democracy.

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (12:57): Can I say at the outset that I am grateful that the member for Fraser has introduced this motion on the Eureka rebellion. It was a great moment. My gratitude also stems from the opportunity it provides to scratch a political itch I have endured for many years. It gives me a chance to set the record straight about what the Eureka Stockade was, and what it was not. It was a tax revolt—an uprising by private sector entrepreneurs against an oppressive mining levy.

The miners who defended the ramparts of the Eureka Stockade on 3 December 1854 were quintessential entrepreneurs. No-one exemplifies the values of the Eureka rebels better than their leader, Peter Lalor. As my good friend next to me, the member for McMillan, pointed out, he lost an arm at the stockade but that did nothing to dampen his thirst for liberty. In one of Australia's most remarkable political metamorphoses, Lalor went from mutineer to MP within the space of 11 months. In November 1855, he entered the legislative council, and then he won election to the assembly the following year. Peter Lalor was an advocate for the principles of limited government in the Victorian parliament.

Now to a few words about what the Eureka Stockade was not. It certainly was not some socialist uprising, like some try to claim in a warped version of history. It is interesting to look to Peter Lalor's words afterwards. When challenged on his ideals, he wrote: I would ask these gentlemen what they mean by the term 'democracy'. Do they mean Chartism or Communism or Republicanism? If so, I never was, I am not now nor do I ever intend to be a democrat. But if a democrat means opposition to a tyrannical press, or a tyrannical government, then I have been, I am still, and will ever remain a democrat.

Yet the member for Fraser apparently thinks otherwise, because his motion asserts that the Eureka Stockade was the inspiration for the Australian Republican Movement. Wrong! Utterly and unequivocally, as the words from Lalor demonstrate. For the record—as my friend the member for McMillan knows—in 1999 I voted 'Yes' to the republican referendum. But my personal preference for an Australian head of state does not make me willing to countenance the deliberate distortion of Australian history. The member for Fraser, I feel, has

FEDERATION CHAMBER
fallen victim to one of the great frauds in the historiography of our nation. His ignorance stems from the arrogation of the Eureka Stockade story by the Left generally, which has warped it beyond all truth or recognition.

The Eureka uprising was a rebellion of capitalists, not collectivists. The rebels were not fighting for a progressive mining tax as the member for Fraser's motion implies. They were fighting against an arbitrary increase in licence fees, as the member for McMillan outlined. And isn't this all so reminiscent of another incompetent government flogging an ill-advised mining tax? I will not go there for reasons only of time.

These days we fight our battles with ballot papers rather than with muskets. Yet over the decades we have watched the Eureka symbol be usurped by those who represent the antithesis of the Eureka spirit. We see trade union yobs wave the Eureka flag as they employ standoff tactics of intimidation during workplace disputes. As we speak, the CFMEU bully boys are flaunting the law through their illegal blockade at the Little Creatures brewery site in Geelong. Not too long ago we saw union yobs attacking Victoria police at a construction site in downtown Melbourne.

In 1854 the Eureka banner signified classical liberal principles of limited government, individual freedom and personal responsibility. But as this motion demonstrates, the Australian Labor Party excels at turning history into mystery—a mystery of myths, stolen symbols and tall tales designed to serve its partisan interests. Let me predict that if Peter Lalor were alive today—he obviously would be very old—he would be climbing every construction crane in sight to take back the Eureka banner that has been so misappropriated and abused by the trade union movement.

Debate adjourned.

World Hepatitis Day

Debate resumed on the motion by **Ms Gambaro**:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) 28 July is World hepatitis Day;
(b) the event is one of only four official world disease awareness days endorsed by the World Health Organization;
(c) chronic hepatitis C is a large and growing health problem in Australia with more than 200,000 people living with the disease;
(d) left untreated, hepatitis C can possibly lead to liver damage, cancer and death;
(e) hepatitis C has now eclipsed HIV/AIDS as the number one viral killer in Australia;
(f) hepatitis C can be cured with the appropriate treatment;
(g) needle and syringe programs have proven effective in relation to preventing transmission of hepatitis B and hepatitis C as well as HIV; and
(h) hepatitis C disproportionately impacts the Indigenous community with Indigenous people representing less than 3 per cent of the total Australian population but more than 8 per cent of the Australian population infected with hepatitis C; and

(2) welcomes scientific and treatment advances that greatly increase the chance of curing patients with the most common and hardest to treat strain of hepatitis C.
Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (13:03): I move the motion on the notice paper standing in my name and at the outset I want to acknowledge the work of the parliamentary group for HIV blood-borne viruses and STIs which is chaired by Senator Louise Pratt, and I am the deputy of the group. I also note that Senator Pratt has moved a similar motion in the Senate recently, raising awareness of 28 July as World Hepatitis Day. It is one of the four official world disease awareness days endorsed by the World Health Organization.

The group has worked very well in a bipartisan way to raise and increase the awareness amongst members and senators of the work being done in the areas of HIV and other blood-borne viruses such as hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is a highly infectious, blood-borne virus that was first identified in 1988 and is transmitted by blood-to-blood contact. The most common cause of hep C in Australia is sharing contaminated drug injecting equipment, and unlike hepatitis B, there is no vaccine for hepatitis C. Around 304,000 Australians have been exposed to the hep C virus and more than a quarter of a million Australians suffer from chronic hepatitis C. Approximately 22,000 of these Australians are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent and 16,000 of those cases are chronic and need treatment. This means that three per cent of the Indigenous population live with this infection and that is nearly three times the rate of the non-Indigenous population. Research has shown that if 100 people are infected with hepatitis C about 25 of those will clear the virus completely within two to six months of infection but will continue to have hepatitis C antibodies in their blood. About 75 of the 100 people who do not clear the virus will develop ongoing or chronic infection. Needle or syringe programs are the main prevention tool in Australia, and they save lives and they save money. However, as I said, to those who have contracted the virus 75 of the 100 will develop chronic hepatitis C. Current medications are available but they mean that most sufferers will have the common strain and they will have less than 40 per cent chance of being cured. Without access to cure, people with hepatitis C are at risk of liver disease, liver failure, liver cancer and ultimately death. Hepatitis C is already the number one reason for liver transplants in this country. As the motion states, it has now eclipsed HIV-AIDS as the number one viral killer in Australia.

The personal stories of people who suffer from chronic hepatitis C are very moving and I want to quote a story from a sufferer that was made available to me. I would have liked to have quoted the whole story but I only have limited time. This woman contracted hepatitis C due to drug use in her youth and over the years has had numerous flare-ups and three rounds of treatment. She says:

It has been five years since I relapsed. Since that time my health has been slowly declining. My liver scarring has progressed and I am exhausted and ache most of the time. I feel that I am living my life trudging through mud. My son is now eight years old. He is such a lovely child. He is energetic and very talkative. He has an acute sense of empathy which is unusual for a child his age. I wonder whether he will look back on his childhood and remember me as being exhausted all the time.

This is an example of the personal side to this terrible disease. However, there is a significant economic cost. The Boston Consulting Group has done analysis and modelling and has found that hepatitis C costs all levels of government $252 million annually and will cost $1.5 billion over the next five years.

In light of recent developments there is new hope for sufferers of chronic hepatitis C. Two drugs, boceprevir and telaprevir, were recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits
Advisory Council in July of this year to be listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. The addition of these medicines increases the cure rate of hepatitis C up to between 60 and 80 per cent. As I said before, the current cure rate is less than 40 per cent. It is currently under negotiation with the department of ageing and once it has been completed the decision to list on the PBS is now with the minister for health waiting to go to cabinet. I urge the government to seriously consider elevating these drugs to the PBS to provide a hope of cure for the many thousands of sufferers of hepatitis C. I certainly commend the motion to the chamber.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:08): I rise today to support Australia's efforts to address hepatitis C and I commend the member for Brisbane for bringing this issue to our attention. Hepatitis C is one of the most misunderstood health conditions in Australia. It is a virus that causes liver inflammation and liver disease. It is called a slow-actin virus because for most people afflicted by this condition it does not necessarily lead to death, although for a small number of those affected it does. But this condition does lead to a range of health problems that, left untreated, severely impact on the health of someone who has contracted the virus. Living with hepatitis C can restrict your ability to work, to parent and to engage in normal physical activities. Those affected can experience chronic pain. Earlier this year I met with John Didlick from the ACT Hepatitis Resource Centre and a constituent of mine and heard firsthand from him about what it is like living with hepatitis C. There are many challenges.

In Australia it is estimated that over 300,000 people have been exposed to hepatitis C, many living with the virus in its chronic rather than active stage, and 225,000 are living with it. Hepatitis C is passed by blood-to-blood contact. The tragedy of hepatitis C is that there are people who in their youth experimented with drugs, and they may have only tried them once or twice, and the result was them getting a virus that has devastating effects on their long-term health and wellbeing. While it is commonly associated with intravenous drug users, there are many who contracted hepatitis C from blood transfusions, from tattoos, from unsterilized surgical equipment or through accidental blood contact with someone who was HCV positive. While, unfortunately, there is no vaccination for hepatitis C, modern medicine has developed a treatment known as pegylated interferon and ribavirin, which is most effective for most viral genotypes.

I am very proud to place on record that here in Canberra we have one of the most expert and recognised regimes for treating hepatitis C in Australia, if not the world. The Canberra Hospital, in my electorate, is one of Australia’s leading treatment centres, and its clearance rate is as good as any other hospital in the world. From all accounts, the nursing staff and specialists at Canberra Hospital provide not only first-class medical treatments but also the psychological and personal support needed by those undergoing treatment programs.

While the success for clearing hepatitis C is very high for most of the genotypes, there are strains that are hard to treat—where more research and investment is needed—and this is why there are people who need to go through a treatment program more than once. What the general public is not necessarily aware of is that those going through the treatment process experience a real rollercoaster ride of side effects. For the fortunate few, however, the side effects are manageable. The various treatment programs, which can range from a few months to almost a year, can have extremely debilitating and stressful impacts.
No matter how a person contracted hepatitis C, it is important to acknowledge that the treatment regime can be extremely arduous and difficult to endure. What is significant about the member for Brisbane’s motion is that it addresses some of the main reasons why we must put in place measures that reduce and hopefully eliminate hepatitis C in Australia. Research commissioned in 2012 points out that, for every dollar spent to treat hepatitis C, $4 is spent to combat the consequence of not treating hepatitis C. So it is not just a health issue; it is also an economic issue.

I note that in Spain and Portugal, two European countries that have in place preventative measures, like needle and syringe programs, they take the view that these are health prevention measures designed to stop the spread of a virus. I welcome any measures that stop hepatitis C from spreading and also measures that lead to improved health outcomes for those affected by hepatitis C. I encourage all Australians to learn more about hepatitis C and to support research and services to eliminate this virus from Australia. Once again, I congratulate and commend the member for Brisbane for this motion.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:12): If we are going to make any progress in this place, we do not need a debate between two sides of the chamber where, on the government side of the debate, they are reading notes about standard therapy that is now old news. I would hope that they would realise that there is now triple therapy that involves protease inhibitors, which has more than doubled the treatment rates. What we heard from the previous speaker is just old-generation treatment propositions—for the simple reason that her very own government has not funded the triple therapy that is freely available and funded in a number of other economies.

This is a government that has completely traduced the role of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee. While it may invoke the advice of experts, it also has to follow that advice. This is a government that has finally unhitched and uncoupled expert advice from the PBAC from their own decisions in cabinet. We have here a government that is more worried about its own fiscal outlook and delivering a surplus in 30 June next than it is about the viral threats that people living with hep C face.

There is excellent triple therapy available. We now understand very well their implications, even in the most complex of patients—with, for example, serious sclerosis or post-liver transplant. Work has been done in France with early access to these drugs. That is years old. Around 6½ thousand people went to Barcelona—which the previous speaker referred to—and talked about the role of triple therapy, and there was a statement made about a commitment to making sure that it is available. There was a very, very good reason for that. There are 300,000 Australians who live with hep C, with 226,000 of them having more than just the antibody response—having a genuine clinical disease. Half of them may be lucky enough not to have symptoms. But let me make one fact very clear: every year that this government delays and dithers on world standard care that has been ticked off and approved by our expert committee represents hundreds of people in this country dying of liver cirrhosis—and a handful will die from hepatocellular carcinoma. So let us not have any more speeches from that side of the House, reading off talking points, talking about standard therapy that is 10 years old. The work has been done; it has been extensively evaluated. We know now there is even more in the pipeline coming through—new drugs that have even fewer side effects, lower levels of anaemia, less need to treat with thrombocytopenic treatments like
eltrombopag, which is the treatment to basically push up production of platelets and reduce the need to lower levels of protease inhibitors, which then obviously reduces your risk of successful treatment and getting control of your viral load. But, no, we have a government that is going in circles.

I put a call out to the next two speakers: acknowledge that there actually is new treatment available in your speeches. It has been through your very own PBAC. Acknowledge that and give us the dates and not talk about where the excuses lie for not moving ahead and helping these Australians have the world-class care that can be accessed if you are a citizen of another country but not here.

What we are seeing in this uncoupling is a breaking up of the PBAC as we know it, from authorised treatments that get ticked off to a new world where they get ticked off by the PBAC but do not get funded by this government. I can appreciate that there have been times when vaccines worth hundreds of millions of dollars were subject to a ATAGI delays, but this is the PBAC and this is not a large amount of money for the uncertainty, the risk of chronic disease and ultimately of death that are faced by people with hep-C. I acknowledge the previous speaker for pointing out that almost a fifth of them have not been involved in injecting drug use, despite the stigma that is attached to that activity; and many of these people only did that once. Let us stop treating them like they are second-class citizens. Let us acknowledge that the treatments are now available and extensively evaluated. It is called triple-therapy, and they have done an enormous amount of work on that around the world. So patients in Australia—there are 226,000 of them—would simply say to this government: 'What do we have to do? Do we have to have another World Hep-C Day on 28 July next year, where this treatment is not available?'

We have massive privacy issues already, reaching out to these patients. They are hard enough to find, in many cases, because five years ago they were told the treatment is too toxic and unpleasant—'So, don't worry about it; you don't need to be treated, you'll probably be okay.' But every month and every year matters. I say to the next two speakers—because I know their hearts are in the right place here—go back and talk to your very own Treasurer. I have said it once and I will say it again: the fiscal problems are self-induced. The fiscal pain that this government is facing next year, where it is effectively snookered on its promise to have a budget surplus, should never trump the people sitting behind me and the people around Australia who just look to Australia, with our world-class PBAC, to make the drugs available through a simple tick of this government's cabinet and at this time, it has not occurred.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (13:17): If I could commence my contribution to this debate by saying hepatitis C is a disease, an illness, that should not be politicised in the way that it was by the previous speaker. People on both sides of this parliament are committed to ensuring the best and timely treatment for people with hepatitis C. In a previous life I actually worked with people who suffered from hepatitis C. One case is particularly memorable for me—a young guy who died at the age of 17. He was having the standard treatment, that is still available. As the previous speaker mentioned, there are new treatments, treatments that should be embraced and will be embraced by the government, I am quite sure.

But the previous speaker took the opportunity to just play politics around such an important issue. I think he stands condemned for that, because it is not in the interests of the people who have hep-C to just make political statements and lower this debate to that base political level;
rather, we should all be working to try and have the new-generation drugs listed. I know that on this side of the parliament we are committed to working to get cures and treatments that are going to help people with hepatitis C. I look at this from the perspective that with hepatitis C, what we need to do is look at education within the community, prevention, research and cure. It is all those things that go together to develop the right kind of outcome for people who are suffering from hepatitis C and those that are potential suffers from hepatitis C. It is through taking a strategy such as that that we can actually deliver real hope for the future to people in our community.

There is a recommendation going to cabinet very shortly. I know that the minister will look at it very seriously. I know that there has been a lot of work done that indicates just how important it is that a number of these drugs are listed. I know that there are many of us on this side of the parliament that will be working to see that people can get the best possible treatment that is needed. I think it is very important that we are debating this motion today in the parliament, because it is also about raising awareness of hepatitis C. The young guy that I talked about that lost his life at 17 years of age and whose real achievement in life, the thing that gave him the most happiness, was actually to pass the test and obtain his driver's licence, obtained his hepatitis C from a blood transfusion. It is very pleasing to note that since 1990, blood is being screened; prior to 1990, it was not. That is all part of the research and putting in place the right protocols to address this disease.

As time goes along, the strategies, the treatment, the prevention and the research change. We need to embrace change. We need to look at it from the perspective of those people that already have hepatitis C and those people that could potentially end up with hepatitis C at some time in their life. That is why the needle exchange program is so important. That is why I would like to encourage all members of this parliament to get behind and support the needle exchange program, as well as new treatments. I have not gone into the statistics and the number of people that suffer from hepatitis C, but needless to say it is 1.4 per cent of our population, and 1.4 per cent of our population deserve to have some hope for the future. Those that do not have hepatitis C need to be certain that they will not end up with hepatitis C. If they do, they need to know that there is a treatment that can help them.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (13:23): I thank the member for Brisbane for presenting this important motion following World Hepatitis Day earlier this year. Chronic hepatitis B is a leading cause of death around the world. In Australia, we have a disproportionate level of chronic hepatitis B infection in Indigenous and migrant populations. Without a change to our approach to treatment, it is predicted that incidents of liver cancer—which is often terminal—will increase exponentially over the coming years, placing huge burdens on patients, families and our national health budget. Hepatitis C is a large and growing health problem, with more than 220,000 people in Australia living with this disease and thousands of new infections identified each year. Hepatitis C has overtaken HIV related deaths in Australia.

Unfortunately, hepatitis C is not often identified, with only two per cent of the population living with hepatitis C treated each year. Untreated hepatitis C can lead to progressive liver damage, liver cancer and death. Hepatitis C is the leading reason for liver transplants in Australia. These figures show us that the time is now to embrace a more holistic approach to hepatitis C prevention, treatment and management. According to the Boston Consulting
Group, for every dollar spent to treat chronic hepatitis C infection, four more dollars are spent on the consequences of failing to prevent and treat the disease.

As the member for Bennelong, with the majority of the nation's pharmaceutical companies based in my electorate, and also as the chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Medicines, I am well aware of the amazing amount of work and investment that goes into the progressive improvement of drug treatments, prevention and care for chronic diseases like hepatitis C. Investment by the government into these treatments will be an investment into our nation's health and into our nation's long-term health budget. Recent medical breakthroughs now present us with an opportunity to make a difference to those suffering from this disease and to further reduce the transmission of the disease in our society. Last year two Bennelong-based companies presented new treatments to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee to obtain approval for listings on the highly specialised drugs program and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Merck Sharp and Dohme submitted Victrelis and Janssen-Cilag submitted Incivo. Both of these received approval from the Therapeutic Goods Administration earlier this year, and PBAC approval in July.

This medicines represent significant clinical advantage in the treatment of hepatitis C, predicting an increase in cure rates from 30 to 40 per cent, using the current standard of care, up to 80 per cent with the new medicines. I understand there are budgetary constraints as this government chops every project it can in a mad scramble to achieve its promised budget surplus. It is therefore very heartening to observe a company like MSD enter a risk-sharing agreement with the Department of Health and Ageing, which will see the total cost of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme capped at $50 million per year for all new hepatitis C medications, with a 100 per cent rebate of any cost to the PBS over $50 million. This means that any cost in making this medicine available to the community of over $50 million will be covered by the pharmaceutical company. This results in an absolute cost to the PBS of $200 million over four years to facilitate great steps in the treatment and prevention of this chronic disease for just over $4 per week for each hepatitis C sufferer.

Several days ago the department signed an agreement with MSD on those terms, meaning that cabinet approval is the only obstacle left that is stopping this marginalised community group from accessing this innovative new medicine. Hepatitis C sufferers in over 25 countries already receive publicly subsidised access to this medication, including the European Union, the United States, Ireland, Canada and Spain. I urge the minister to fast-track this listing for cabinet approval and to bring Australia into the modern era of hepatitis C treatment and prevention. I thank again the member for Brisbane for introducing this motion and allowing this parliament to recognise the 220,000 Australians silently suffering from this disease and the way in which we as policymakers can provide better treatment and help prevent the further spread of hepatitis C.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (13:27): I too would like to thank the honourable member for Brisbane for bringing this matter before the House. The private member's motion was to acknowledge World Hepatitis Day, which was 28 July. The motion also lists a number of facts and figures and observations that I wholeheartedly support, including point (2), which says:

... welcomes scientific and treatment advances that greatly increase the chance of curing patients with the most common and hardest to treat strain of hepatitis C.
There are a number of other things that the honourable member pointed out in there. What I would like to put on the public record is some facts and figures to do with the area that I live in. My home is Lismore, my seat is Page, I live in the Northern Rivers on the North Coast, and I have here some observations and statistics which I got from North Coast Medicare Local and also from the local health service. It was on one of the papers of the ASHM New South Wales. It was a paper about chlamydia, STIs, hepatitis B and hepatitis C, and it was issues from Medicare Locals. I quote from that:

Northern NSW has the highest notification rate of HCV—
that is hepatitis c—
in NSW. The rate is highest in the LGAs of Byron and Lismore—
Lismore is my home town.
Northern NSW has the 4th highest rate of—
and then it goes on and talks about chlamydia. It also talks about the rates there and it covers the North Coast of New South Wales, a bigger area. So it is covering the Northern Rivers and the North Coast. The paper has a table which covers the same areas and which has a measurement of the high impact, medium impact and low impact. Again, it has HIV data, but it also talks about hepatitis B and C and chlamydia, but hepatitis C, HCV, is rated at No. 1, which is the highest impact on the scale of one to 15, with 15 being the lowest impact. I thought it was important that I put that on the record.

I also have here a media statement from 25 July. In the statement, the Northern New South Wales Local Health District Manager of HIV and related programs, Jenny Heslop, was talking about data from Medicare Locals which showed the rate of hepatitis C infection. Again, it shows the same figures but they are saying that, even though there are a number of public health strategies in place, there is still a way to go. The media statement talked about illnesses that hepatitis C can cause, such as cirrhosis, liver failure and cancer. But it can be treated. In the media release Jenny Heslop talks about treatment and what the treatment is. She said that it has a really high success rate, which I think is over 70 per cent. She was encouraging people to utilise that treatment.

The same report that I was referring to earlier, I think, talked about people receiving treatment. The figure was quite low. I cannot remember but I think it was 1.6 per cent or something. That has stuck in my mind. I had to read it a few times to believe it because it seemed incredibly low. Somehow we have to get more people getting treatment. I want to quote from the Economic Impact of Hepatitis C in Australia, a report by the Boston Consulting Group. They make a whole lot of observations, including about prisons and the high numbers of people in prisons. We cannot forget about people in prisons and we need to do a lot of work there. The report goes on to talk about two new drugs and says that one has had:

… regulatory approval in the US, Canada, Japan, the UK, the EU, Switzerland and Australia, although it is not yet listed here on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule …
I think they are the drugs that people are talking about. I know people who are utilising them and getting some good results. I have read a report on how they work. (Time expired)

Debate adjourned.

Proceedings suspended from 13:33 to 16:00
Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (16:00): I am pleased to speak on the Migration Amendment (Reform of Employer Sanctions) Bill 2012, because this bill seeks to impose an additional regulatory regime on employers who employ foreign nationals who are illegal or do not have work rights. We agree with that. That is common sense, and no-one in their right mind would disagree with that. In our opinion this bill goes too far and I will explain this as I go. The bill amends the Migration Act to alter criminal offence provisions and to create a new civil penalties regime with maximum fines of $49,500 for corporate entities and $9,900 for individuals in an infringement notice scheme. There is a whole lot of detail to the bill; I will not trawl over every bit, but the new requirements proposed by the bill are onerous, unnecessary and are in direct opposition to the coalition's commitment to reducing the regulatory burden and compliance costs on business. That is the crux of the matter. On this side of the parliament, we understand that business want government to get out of their way, make it easier for them and create a climate to operate in where they can actually turn a dollar and make a profit, because business are not going to employ anyone if they do not make a profit; they will go out of business and the worker will not have a job.

This bill adds to the already substantial regulatory burden imposed by this Labor government on employers who hire overseas workers; for example, those contained in the Migration Legislation Amendment (Worker Protection) Act 2008. This act provided DIAC with expanded powers to monitor and investigate possible non-compliance by sponsors and introduced new penalties et cetera. This was working quite well—and I will not go through the whole gamut of it because it is quite detailed. What the Labor party said was: 'Look, we don't think it goes far enough; we're going to engage Stephen Howells to conduct a review of this part of the Migration Act.'

In 2007 this act was brought in, and in 2010 they asked Stephen Howells to do an investigation; he reported in 2011. But the problem with Mr Howells's recommendations is that instead of having a common-sense approach to the numbers of people that have been found to be employed illegally or working without proper rights, he actually found that there were very few. In fact, in the whole of the work done beforehand—in 2008-09 the department located 11,428 unlawful non-citizens in Australia, and out of those only 990 were confirmed as working illegally. Mr Howells's report says, 'Yes, but it could be up to 100,000 people.' That is only anecdotal, and they do not have any figures to substantiate that. Even if it was, out of Australia's 11 million workers, on Mr Howells's own figures it is less than one per cent of workers. They would be far better off trying to do what they could to identify those working illegally than to put the onus on the poor old business. We know that, because of the language problems, there are a number of ethnic businesses, in particular, that employ people illegally. They say there could be 100,000 people here illegally who are being exploited by a restaurant or construction company that can get them cheaply because they do not have work rights. That is wrong and they should be prosecuted. But, on his own figures the numbers are
so small. As a matter of principle, we in the coalition do not support government policy that shifts the administrative burden on to the employers. Where is the government's role in this? Where is the beefing up of the migration department?

Just to demonstrate how sad this is; Labor Party policy has increased red tape out of proportion since Labor has been in government. In fact, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's national red-tape survey indicates that the extra compliance through red tape since the Labor Party has been in government is costing Australia an extra $1 billion a year. The ACCI survey states almost three quarters of businesses are spending more time on regulation than they were just two years ago. The financial costs of compliance are also rising. The survey of 870 businesses shows that 72 per cent spent more time on compliance, as I said, than they did two years ago, with 44 per cent spending between one to five hours a week, and 37 per cent spending more than five hours a week on this compliance activity.

The cost of compliance is also increasing, with 60 per cent of businesses saying they spend over $5,000 on compliance. According to parliamentary research, since late 2007—you know what happened after 2007, you got Kevin 07 and the fascinating election of Kevin Rudd and this Labor government—when Labor came to power, it has introduced more than 20,000 new items of regulation. This is the ACCI survey, not mine, not the Liberal Party's. Today, the survey no doubt reflects some of its impact. Just a month ago the World Economic Forum—to my learned friend across the chamber: if you do not like the ACCI, how about the World Economic Forum—revealed that Australia now ranked 96th in terms of burden of government regulation, compared with 68th when Labor came to power.

On independent figures, wherever you want to go, the multiplying factor of this compliance has affected productivity, which has fallen by 4.2 per cent since July 2007. Again, this coincides well with the election of a certain government. The government's so-called deregulation agenda is not addressing the underlying economic challenge of relative productivity. The government report not only failed to address the underlying economic challenges, but surprisingly indicated areas where they have introduced additional regulations. We know many of these recent regulatory examples such as the carbon tax and the mining tax. The mining tax has cost companies millions of dollars to regulate and implement and it did not raise one dollar for the government. It did not raise them any money but they are spending millions of dollars while mid-caps, juniors and everyone else are trying to comply. The government—

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr RANDALL: This is certainly about the bill because it is about the compliance regime that this government has put on industry right across Australia. This is where we are going. As the learned member across the chamber asked about the bill, I will go further to the bill.

One of the compliance factors is the imposition of a mandatory training requirement for 457 visa holders. The government also introduced legislation which effectively meant that two per cent of an employer's payroll tax had to be spent on training if they had overseas or temporary overseas workers. This is a new thing. The 457 visas worked. We as the coalition do not say that everyone should have a 457 visa worker. I have been vocal in the party room—as my colleague from Brisbane will tell you—and I have got up there and said: Australian workers first—train our young kids. We should be training our young kids in Australia and upskilling them first. At the end of the day, every now and then you are going to
find a situation where you need a specific set of skills, and these people are sourced quite often on temporary visas called 457s. Combined with the introduction of the temporary skills migration income threshold, the cost to Australian business of employing temporary overseas workers has become prohibitive.

I wish to bring to the attention of this House—and I alluded to this last year—one of the crazy things in my own electorate that this compliance did. Borrello Cheese in my electorate sought to bring in a specialised cheese maker. Borrello is very good at their specialty cheeses. It is a family-run and owned business by Vince and Teresa Borrello. They are a couple of people of Italian origin who came here and set up this marvellous boutique industry. They are famous for their bocconcini cheeses, which I am sure, you would know, Deputy Speaker Scott. They are beautiful with tomato and a bit of basil and a bit of drizzled balsamic vinegar. It is some of the nicest cheese you will come across. Because they have got the whole range of cheese there, they decided to mentor and upskill their workers. As none of them had been to any courses, they would get a specialist Italian cheese maker from Italy.

They had a lot of help in this because they were blocked all the way along. Even Nick Catania, former state Labor MP, was helping Vince and Teresa eventually find a Mr Pelati, an Italian cheese maker, whose qualifications were right. His English was correct, not to mention the fact that he was enthusiastic and keen to get on with the job to help the local people employed in that cheese factory grow the business.

Vince and Teresa did the right thing: complied with the visa, paid for his transport, medical costs, set-up costs et cetera. All of a sudden he got a letter from DIAC saying that he was going to have to leave the country. It was rather strange, because they could not understand why a junior officer from DIAC in Perth had said that Mr Pelati was going to have to leave the country.

It was not until I went to a senior case officer who was very good and explained the difficulties in this area. A Mr Robert Bailey explained what the difficulty was. We know that this is a roadblock that has been put in the way of people employing people, because of the infiltration and interference of unions who do not want to see any outside workers, particularly if they do not belong to one of their unions.

Mr Bailey from DIAC said, 'They've got to pay this levy.' He initially said it was a one per cent levy, which was going to cost $8,890—nearly $9,000—a year to have this cheese maker stay in Australia, but it had to go to a registered training organisation. There are no registered training organisations in Australia that have cheese makers—not one. So they had to find someone to give this money to. Lo and behold, they ran into another roadblock. It was not one per cent at all; it was two per cent of your payroll tax that had to be spent on training—not on the training of the workers in Mr Borrello's cheese factory; he had to find a registered training organisation in Australia that he could give this $18,000 to.

He eventually thought he had found somebody in Melbourne that might put his $18,000 towards training but, at the end of the day—

A government member: Couldn't they find anyone else?

Mr RANDALL: No, they could not find anyone suitable. Eventually, after the anger and the angst, Mr Pelati said, 'What's going on with this silly country of yours? I've come here to make cheese and you're in my way. You won't let me work.'
They eventually found a place at New Norcia near Gingin north of Perth and they got this windfall gain. When the training authority got the $18,000, they said, 'What's that for?' They said, 'We don't know. We just have to give it to someone, so we're going to give it to you.'

So they gave them $18,000. Mr Pelati got to stay, but here is the rub: Mr Pelati wanted to be paid well for his specific skills and he wanted a good salary, so they negotiated an above-award salary. Sorry, you cannot work unless you are on the industry award so he said, 'I'm not taking less. I'm leaving,' and he went back to Italy.

After all that, mess, thank you very much for your compliance and your interference, DIAC and everyone else, the Borrellos went back to making their own cheese and not having to pay more than the one-off $18,000. So the compliance and the interference that is involved in these sorts of regulations is unnecessary.

If you are chasing illegal workers, yes, fund DIAC to go and investigate and hunt them down properly but do not get in the way of business from doing a proper job of making a profit and employing people who want to grow the business and further culturally enhance something like the Borrellos were trying to do in this country. I rest my case.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:14): I speak in support of the Migration Amendment (Reform of Employer Sanctions) Bill 2012, and I will actually deal with the bill. I support this particular legislation; it has long history. Back in 1999 the former Howard government commissioned a review of illegal workers but sat on that review year after year. In fact, former Liberal minister Philip Ruddock introduced the Migration Amendment (Employer Sanctions) Act 2007, which came to affect on the eve of the federal election period on 19 August 2007—the federal election was in November 2007.

Having had a government review into illegal workers, they did nothing—year after year. At the time of its introduction, a review after two years of operation was planned. When the Liberals lost office and, fortunately, the Australian people entrusted a Labor government to serve in the Treasury benches, we said we would announce a review of the effectiveness of a particular legislation. We did that on 21 May 2010, and we appointed a very senior commercial barrister, Stephen Howells, to undertake the review.

The prevalence of illegal workers affects employers and employees. The major concerns with illegal work practices are that it means that people who are employed illegally are more susceptible to exploitation by venal employers. It means that concerns for workplace health and safety are less likely to be complied with. Employing those workers illegally has the effect of driving down wages and conditions, lowering safety standards and taking away the opportunities for Australian workers to get jobs. At its most egregious we have seen labour trafficking, forced labour and, effectively, economic slavery. This is a serious problem.

The former legislation put in place an alleged deterrent: companies could be exposed to fines of up to $66,000 per illegal worker. But, having investigated about 100 allegations against employers, it was found that only four were referred by DIAC to the Commonwealth Department of Public Prosecutions. There were significant difficulties in developing prima facie cases against employers, and the only conviction we saw was in December 2010. This was a case where an employer was convicted and sentenced after a plea of guilty acknowledging a previous criminal record—a pretty straightforward case. A deterrent it was not.
The principal reason given in relation to this was the trouble gathering evidence. The best person to get the evidence is the employee who was working illegally, who may also find themselves in a position of legal sanction. It is possible that that illegal worker could find themselves in a detention facility awaiting trial, and the whole thing is extraordinarily expensive. So it is the case that employers with the worst motives could employ workers illegally, sourcing cheap labour, driving down wages and conditions, denying Australians the opportunities for those jobs and making sure that safety is not a high priority in the workplace. We do know that the vast majority of people who come to this country illegally, if I can put it like that, are people who arrive in Australia by aeroplane on valid visas and who stay here after the visa has expired. We see that quite regularly after major events are held in this country. They are not people who are the victims of effectively criminal cartels or people smugglers and who come to this country by boat and claim asylum.

The reality is that we could either resource DIAC even more and continue the current arrangements, which are not working and which the Howells review showed are not working—the evidence was clearly that they were not working—or we could take up the recommendations that were made by Stephen Howells. On 21 July 2011, the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, Mr Bowen, announced that we would overhaul the penalties, make substantial changes in this area and make sure that those employers employing employees without the appropriate visa and appropriate rights to work could be sanctioned to a tiered system and were subject and liable to that. We have engaged extensively in relation to this. In fact, stakeholders have had about 13 years, in effect, of opportunities to put their case to government in relation to this issue, and have done so.

Employers, employees and trade unions—including the ACTU—have made submissions to the Howells review. The Howells review made a number of recommendations. It recommended the retention of the current criminal sanctions and penalties. It recommended legislation of a tiered system, as I said. And it recommended the idea of new civil penalties, with strict liability provisions and with statutory defences that employers could avail themselves of in circumstances where they had done the right thing. Also, there would be judicial discretion and maximum penalties of about $10,000. Stephen Howells recommended a system of infringement notices, with sanctions of about $1,000 and legislation, as I said, to protect those employers who do the right thing. He also talked about the need for better education concerning obligations and awareness for employers in those circumstances.

Many employers are very much aware of 457 visas—certainly, in the meat industry which is aware of them. In my electorate, Kilcoy Pastoral Company up in Kilcoy and JBS meatworks in Dinmore employ many people who come in on 457 visas in circumstances where there are workforce shortages in IT. In the health sector 457 visas are used as well, such as for doctors. Many medical practices in my regional and rural electorate are full of doctors who are here on visas and who become important parts of the local economy and community. In many cases, they are beloved for the work they do.

The federal government called for further information and submissions from interested parties. We have effectively decided to take a tougher stance by bringing in the civil system. We have decided to extend liabilities to third parties in order to address sham contracting arrangements as well, where people are engaged in circumventing the law. We made sure that the integrity of our migration system in this regard was protected. We wanted to make sure
that there would be no reduction in working opportunities for Australians. The critical thing in all of this, and I have seen this personally in my electorate, is that foreign workers—those workers who come to this place and who do contribute to our local economy—are not subject to exploitation. It was estimated that up to 100,000 people were working illegally in this country, and that had grown from about 50,000 in 1998. The Howard government's response was inadequate. It acted as no deterrent, it was ineffective and, in effect, it impugned the integrity of our migration system, and it provided further opportunity for the exploitation of vulnerable people. We put the exposure draft of this bill into the public domain in August 2012 and we have had many submissions in relation to it. We put forward this legislation which brings in and acts on the recommendations of the Howells review. I am particularly interested in, and I am particularly in support of, the tiered enforcement strategy that is there—the creation of the no-fault base civil penalties—which has a lower standard than a criminal standard. Establishing a new civil penalty framework is important. This legislation also introduces new monitoring and investigation powers authorising officers to gather evidence of suspected breaches. As I mentioned before, the gathering of evidence was always a problem.

This legislation is an example of this federal Labor government fixing up a problem that the previous Howard coalition government had failed to address year after year, and on the eve of an election they decided they would seek to do something to make out they were protecting Australian jobs and protecting those people who were vulnerable. Once again, like their Work Choices legislation, it was inadequate, wrong, fallacious in terms of the law and did not result in good workplace practices in this country. In the circumstances, this legislation does seek to address that. It acts on best practice and brings us into line very much with what is happening in New Zealand, the UK and the US. I commend the legislation to the House.

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (16:26): The bill should be seen for exactly what it is. It is an example, again, of this government's war on employers. The stated objective of the bill is to impose an additional regulatory regime on employers who employ foreign nationals who are illegal or who do not have work rights. The bill amends the Migration Act to alter criminal offence provisions and create a new civil penalties with a regime of maximum fines of $49,500 for corporate entitles and $9,900 for individuals, as well as creating an infringement notice scheme. It looks also at broadening the application of criminal offences and civil penalty provisions to people who allow or refer an unlawful non-citizen to work or to work in breach of visa conditions, and it creates statutory defences where reasonable steps are taken to verify a foreign national worker's entitlement to work. It creates an infringement notice tier setting under the civil penalties provision allowing a person or corporate entity to pay a fine as an alternative to court proceedings. It also amends the current aggravated offences provision so that a person commits an aggravated offence when a worker is or will be exploited doing the work and the person who allowed the work or referred the worker knows this or is reckless about it. It also extends criminal and civil liability, in certain circumstances, to executive officers of bodies corporate, partners in a partnership and members of an unincorporated association's committee of management, and it creates search warrants and notice to produce powers specifically to facilitate the investigation of suspected breaches of these offences and civil penalties.
What a joy it is to be an employer under the Labor government. I have been an employer and I have employed students who were 20 hours a week, and I knew that was all they were entitled to work. I have also employed people under the working holiday makers program. But this Labor government puts all employers under the same blanket and treats them all the same, and decides that it is just going to put more complexity into the system. This bill is another myriad of onerous regime that it seeks to introduce, and it is testament to Labor's increasing obsession with making life difficult for as many employers as it can with more and more layers of red tape. You only have to look at the explanatory memorandum, which is 105 pages long. It is amazing. This would make the flow chart of Labor's red-tape obsession. It leaves the knowledge flow chart we saw some years back in the shade—and we know what a testament to clear and logical thinking that was, requiring navigation via a crystal ball and a ouija board. That is what this government does. It punishes the business sector.

In October of this year the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry released its National Red Tape Survey. The member for Canning highlighted some of the results of that survey. The chamber surveyed 870 businesses across all states and territories. The survey had some very interesting results and part of the member for Canning's speech highlighted that. But 73 per cent of businesses believe the overall compliance burden has increased in the last two years—what a surprise that is. Sixty per cent of businesses spent more than $5,000 per annum directly on costs related to regulatory requirements, with 16.1 per cent of businesses spending more than $50,000 per annum. Over 54 per cent of businesses spent more than five hours on their last tax return while 30 per cent outsourced it. Over 54 per cent of businesses perceive that regulatory compliance prevents businesses from growing.

What is difficult to understand is that the additional red tape the government seeks to introduce with this bill flies in the face of its own 2007 red-tape reduction election commitment. This government went to the election under the glib sound bite 'one-in one-out'. I remember that very well. Let us have a look at this government's report card against that election promise. When they said one-in one-out, on 29 October this year, the government had introduced 20,884 regulations and had repealed the wonderful number of—only—104. That is not one-in one-out, that is 200 in for every one out. An incredible tragedy, at the end of the spectrum, is the contrast with their 2007 red-tape election promise.

With numbers like that Labor should have called it their red-tape elevation election commitment, because at least then the government would have been able to lay claim to having had an election promise that they had delivered against. Regrettably, the numbers really do tell the story: 200 in for every one out. There is no conclusion to make other than that this government is anti-employers, anti-jobs and anti-productivity. Don't just take my word for it: according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, multifactor productivity has fallen by 6.6 per cent in Australia, from July 2004 to June 2011, with 4.2 per cent of this fall occurring from July 2007.

A study undertaken in August 2012 by the Economist Intelligence Unit ranked Australia as the second worst of 51 countries for productivity growth, ahead only of—and we should be very proud of this—Botswana. That is something we should truly be proud of as a nation. This less than stellar performance is also confirmed by the 2012 McKinsey study, called Beyond the boom: Australia's productivity imperative. This indicates that Australia's experience of income growth between 2005 and 2011 was driven by rising terms of trade and...
an upsurge in capital investment, not by labour productivity growth, which was weak, or by capital productivity, which actually fell quite significantly.

Against this backdrop we have, today, another bill that is introducing red tape. It is the very last thing Australian employers need, but it is just what this Labor government wants to slug them with through this bill. One of the primary reasons legislation is proposed and introduced into the parliament is to address unresolved needs or problems, or to correct a perceived mischief. What is the unresolved need or mischief this government is seeking to address here?

The best starting point in search for a meaningful answer to his question is the government's engagement of Mr Stephen Howells to conduct a review of the Migration Amendment (Employers Sanction) Act 2007 in 2010. In December 2011 the government announced that it would legislate to implement the recommendations contained in that review.

The current employer sanctions regime, introduced by the Howard government in 2007, set out criminal offences for allowing an unlawful noncitizen to work; allowing a non-citizen to work in breach of a visa condition restricting work; allowing the referring an unlawful noncitizen to work, and allowed for referring a noncitizen to work in breach of a visa condition restricting work. Therefore, under the existing legislation, for a person to be successfully prosecuted for committing one of these offences, it must have been shown that these offences were committed either with knowledge or due to recklessness. The current sanctions regime also provides for an aggravated offence where the worker is subject to exploitation. In considering the question of what mischief does this bill supposedly address, it is instructive to examine how many times these existing provisions have actually been used since the commencement of the existing legislation in 2007.

According to Mr Howells' report, of the approximately 100 instances of possible breaches of these existing provisions considered by the DIAC offices, only four of them were suitable to be referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions—that is right, there were only four cases since 2007—hardly what you would describe as a 'burning bridge' necessitating further regulatory overreach by a red-tape-happy Labor government that is never happier than when it is slugging the business sector as hard as it can. It was very interesting to hear the member for Blair analysing all of this. I cannot understand this, and the member for Blair is a former lawyer as well. I cannot understand why, on the basis of this very low prosecution rate, Mr Howells' report makes the following astounding conclusions about the existing sanction provisions contained in the Migration Amendment (Employer Sanctions) Act 2007, that they are supposedly:

... wholly ineffective as a deterrent against the small number of employers and labour suppliers who engage or refer non-citizens who do not have lawful permission to work or who work in breach of their visa conditions. The Employer Sanctions provisions are also ineffective as an educational tool for recalcitrant employers and labour suppliers.

This bizarre—and it is absolutely bizarre—contradiction fundamentally undermines Mr Howells' report's recommendation. On one hand the report acknowledges that there have been very few breaches and even fewer convictions, while on the other hand such sparse behaviour apparently warrants the imposition of an even greater regulatory burden on employers. On this basis, the Howells report utterly fails in making a case that the extent of illegal workers warrant the heavy handedness of the response. Once again I return to the question: where is the mischief?
Mr Howells' report states that in 2008-09, DIAC located 11,428 unlawful noncitizens in Australia and, of those, only 990 were confirmed to be working illegally. The report estimates that up to 100,000 people were working illegally in Australia at any one time. However, the figures are purely speculative as they assume that all overstayers are working illegally. The total labour force in Australia is some 11 million, so even if the estimates in the Howells report are accurate, that is less than 0.9 per cent of 1 per cent of the workforce. The flames on the so-called 'burning bridge' just got higher. This is a great calamity requiring legislative solutions and posing more unnecessary burdens on Australian businesses. We are talking about a number that is equivalent to 0.9 per cent of the workforce that maybe working illegally, and I emphasise that there is no other way to view this bill than to say that it is a regulatory overreach which has gone mad. Why are we taking up the resources of the parliament in addressing a problem that scarcely exists, and more importantly, that is more than adequately dealt with by the existing law? We have heard about the onus on employers, but where is the onus on people who are working illegally under this legislation? I note that recently, the department changed some of its proof of records. Previously, people who were working in this country just had to quote an ABN, but I understand now that they are asking for proof of bank records and payslips; that is a very welcome move. But why does a Labor government have a pathological obsession with slugging employers in any way that it can? Speaking of employer groups, the government should not have been wasting everyone's time in drafting this bill. There have been various groups—according to the submissions received from, for example, the Australian Industry Group and various chambers—who believe the proposed changes in this bill to be:

... heavy handed and unnecessary. Imposing strict liability offences on employers and labour suppliers will not deter the small minority of employers or labour suppliers who already knowingly abuse the law to engage cheap labour. Rather the proposed changes will impact the unintended targets: i.e. good employers and labour suppliers. It is unfair that these persons be subject to high regulatory burdens because of the illegal practices of just a very small few.

In this context, the coalition opposes this bill, and I call on the government members to remember their own 2007 red-tape reduction election commitment. One in and one out; throw this one out even before it gets in. It is, again, an overreach imposing greater regulatory burdens on businesses out there who already have to contend with a huge regulatory burden that has just increased under this Labor government.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (16:42): The bill implements the government's response to the independent report of the 2010 review of the Migration Amendment (Employer Sanctions) Act 2007, conducted by Mr Stephen Howells. In 1999, the Howard government was presented with the results of a review into illegal work in Australia which concluded that the extent of illegal work in Australia was a significant problem and that measures in place at the time were insufficient to address the problem. The 1999 report recommended the adoption of a range of employer sanctions. Critically, the report recommended sanctions which encompassed both fault based offences with criminal penalties and strict liability offences with civil penalties as well as infringement notices. Unfortunately, the Howard government failed to act on these recommendations. It was not until 2007 that it belatedly introduced legislation which provided for criminal sanctions.

The 2010 review of these measures, conducted by the barrister Stephen Howells, found that the existing Howard government sanctions were wholly ineffective. These measure have not
provided a practical mechanism to instil in businesses the need to comply, nor acted as a
deterrent to illegal work hire practices. Illegal work hire practices undermine the integrity of
Australia's migration program and can result in the exploitation of vulnerable workers. Such
conduct may also put at a disadvantage those businesses that only engage workers who are
etitled to work and it reduces work opportunities for Australian citizens.

The Howells review recommended implementation of the 1999 scheme, with a little
modification, including graduated tiers of education, warnings, infringement notices, non-
fault civil penalties and criminal offences. This is intended to encourage voluntary
compliance by businesses, and when this does not occur, provide effective sanctions. The
amendment in this bill will amend the criminal offences and create new non-fault civil penalty
provisions for persons who: firstly, allow an unlawful non-citizen to work; secondly, refer an
unlawful non-citizen to a third person for work; thirdly, allow a lawful non-citizen to work in
breach of a work related visa condition; and finally, refer a lawful non-citizen to a third
person for work in breach of a work related visa condition. The Howells report provided a
compelling analysis and critique of the effectiveness of the current framework for dealing
with the problem of illegal work. It concluded that the prevalence of illegal work had
increased markedly since the 1999 review, with potentially more than 100,000 workers
currently being employed without valid work rights. This bill allows the government to crack
down on employers who hire illegal workers by setting out a range of civil and criminal
penalties. The graduated system of sanctions will operate as a last resort and should only be of
concern to those employers who seek to circumvent the law. The legislation's key
amendments include: amending the criminal offences and creating new, non-fault civil
penalty provisions and an infringement notice scheme for people who allow or refer an
unlawful noncitizen to work, or allow or refer a lawful noncitizen to work in breach of a work
related condition; creating statutory defences where reasonable steps are taken at reasonable
times to verify a foreign national worker's entitlement to work; broadening the application of
criminal offences and civil penalty provisions to hold a person liable for participating in an
arrangement or series of arrangements that result in a foreign national working without lawful
entitlement; extending both criminal and civil liability, in certain circumstances, to executive
officers of bodies corporate, partners in a partnership and members of an unincorporated
association's committee of management; and creating search warrant and notice to produce
powers specifically to facilitate the investigation of suspected breaches of these offences and
civil penalties.

In order to address the illegal practices of sham contracting, informal labour hire and use of
illegal workers by various entities within a conglomerate, the application of the criminal
offences and civil penalty provisions will be broadened so that a person who participates in
the chain of events that results in a noncitizen being allowed or referred to work without the
required permission can be held liable for contravening work related offences and work
related provisions. In addition, the bill will extend both criminal and civil liability to
executive officers of bodies corporate, partners in a partnership and members of an
unincorporated association's committee of management in appropriate circumstances. It also
introduces investigative powers to allow authorised officers to gather evidence of suspected
breaches of the work related offences and work related provisions.
To the extent that the government's legislative response may be resisted by some employers, those arguments are likely to have the underlying theme that the introduction of strict liability offences will impose requirements that are too onerous or burdensome on employers, that it is not the responsibility of employers, that more education is the answer, that more time is needed, or that there will be an impost on business. Similar arguments were run throughout the Howard government years to resist and delay the changes which were recommended by the 1999 review. The case for change has been clearly articulated by the ACTU as follows:

It is not seriously contested that illegal work is a problem for a whole of variety of reasons, both for the illegal workers themselves, as well as all those working legally, whether they be Australian citizens and residents, or overseas workers with valid work rights. The prevalence of illegal work ... affects ... those employers who are doing the right thing, and the broader community. Major concerns with illegal work include:

- employees employed illegally are more susceptible to exploitation and less likely to raise matters such as ill-treatment, safety concerns or under-payment because of their highly precarious status;
- it has the effect of driving down local wages and conditions, lowering safety standards, and taking away local employment opportunities;
- those employers employing illegal workers are less likely to comply with other legal obligations such as industrial relations, OHS, workers' compensation and taxation laws; and
- In the worst cases, it can involve labour trafficking, forced labour, and slavery.

The real issue then becomes what practical measures are required to address the problem to reduce and remove the impact and incidence of illegal work. This means measures to deter employers who might be tempted to employ overseas workers without valid work rights and to ensure that those who do the wrong thing can be dealt with effectively.

One of the more disturbing aspects of illegal work is the use of student visas to bring people to Australia for exploitation in the sex industry. Anecdotal evidence given to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee of the parliament of Victoria for its inquiry into people-trafficking for sex work, and its subsequent report in June 2010, suggests that the number of trafficked women on student visas is quite large and growing. Certainly, Commonwealth prosecutors working on trafficking cases have seen evidence of trafficked women entering Australia on student visas. Indeed, being on a student visa did not exclude them from working legitimately in the sex industry. The prosecutors told the committee the problem was that in such cases it was very difficult to prove these women were working more than the 20 hours permitted on such a visa or that they had been brought to Australia to be exploited as trafficking victims.

The report of the committee indicated that trafficking can occur whether women arrive through legal means with valid visas and documentation, or through illegal means. It is not unusual for traffickers to arrange documentation such as student, visitor, tourist or working holiday visas on the basis of incorrect, forged or otherwise fraudulent applications in the source country. At this stage of the recruitment process money may also be deposited in an account opened in the victim's name to give veracity to her application for a visa. This may be particularly the case if the woman has made an application for a tourist visa. She will then be able to show she has sufficient means to support herself in Australia even though it is highly unlikely she will have access to, or control over, those monies once she has reached her
destination. There is also some evidence that traffickers may arrange for sham marriages to a 'mule' or other person in order to strengthen their visa applications.

Concern has also been expressed to the committee about the role played by some colleges that accept overseas students particularly in Sydney and Melbourne. There have been strong suggestions that this under regulated sector is being used to provide a cover for traffickers and their operations. In particular, it has been observed that some colleges have been less than vigilant in monitoring attendance rates of people on student visas when they are obliged to do so. Evidence given to the inquiry by trafficking victims support workers also indicated that, in some instances, women are even paid to attend college, or at least make an appearance, as substitutes for the enrolled victim. Nina Vallins, the Executive Director of Project Respect, stated:

We are aware of cases where women have come in on student visas and they never set foot in the school. The school is in on it. The school is paid off or whatever it is to tick the women off on their roll, or there have been cases where someone else would go to the school on behalf of that woman and pretend to be her. But clearly there are these very dodgy schools which are assisting traffickers in their operations. It is a frustration for us that there does not appear to be monitoring of the schools.

The Salvation Army also told the committee how bona fide students may get caught up in trafficking once in Australia. Captain Danielle Strickland said that in her view many young women who are legitimately here as students and are finding it hard to make ends meet are susceptible to being recruited for sex work whilst in Melbourne. That is, they are subjected to a form of domestic trafficking.

There are also many documented examples of exploitation of workers on 457 visas, the temporary migrant workers. I was recently made aware by the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers of the dismissal of the Danish engineer, Tonny Lind, who was on a 457 visa sponsored by Maersk Australia. According to the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers, Mr Lind questioned the company regarding whether his rate of pay was less than what he was entitled to. When the company did not address his concerns he sought advice from the union and then went to the Fair Work Ombudsman. The company subsequently dismissed Mr Lind, making reference in their letter of dismissal to the fact that he was seeking redress through Australian authorities over his pay and, as a result, instant dismissal was warranted pursuant to Danish law. This seems extraordinary to me and tends to confirm the concerns I have expressed for a number of years that 457 visas are open to abuse as a vehicle to pay reduced wages and conditions.

There was also the recent decision by Fair Work Australia in reference to the Giovenco Industries and Rio Tinto Alcan maintenance agreement of 2012. The Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers has also expressed concerns to me about this agreement. The Institute of Marine and Power Engineers believes that in this case 13 senior employees were made redundant, and the company then employed five workers of Filipino background just prior to the vote on the agreement, and that the latter were not allowed enough time nor had the ability to meaningfully understand the enterprise bargaining agreement that they were to vote on. The nominated bargaining agent for the agreement at the time, Mr Michael Huddy, asserted that the five workers were employed on 15 February just prior to the vote on 20 February and therefore did not receive a notice of representation rights at least 21 days prior to the employer requesting that they approve the proposed enterprise agreement under section

FEDERATION CHAMBER
173 of the Fair Work Act of 2009. Mr Huddy noted that the vote on 20 February was 46 votes yes and 43 votes no and that this followed a previously unsuccessful vote a couple of months earlier in December 2011. Fair Work Australia determined that no breach of notice of representation rights had occurred as the requirement to notify in section 173 arises at notification time and applies only to employees employed at notification time, and was subsequently not applicable to the Filipino workers.

I believe this agreement raises serious concerns about the potential for abuse of subclass 457 visas. The case highlights a loophole in the act that allows an employer to secure an agreement in circumstances where it could well be that the aforementioned five workers were not in a position to understand their rights and options.

Recent estimates put the number of unlawful noncitizens and lawful noncitizens working without permission in Australia at around 100,000. This is despite the fact that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship continues to have considerable success in locating illegal workers. We must tackle the continuing practice of allowing or referring unlawful noncitizens, or lawful noncitizens without the required permission, to work. It remains a serious issue as it undermines the integrity of Australia's migration program and has resulted in the exploitation of vulnerable people. It places Australian businesses engaging noncitizen workers without permission to work at a competitive advantage and penalises employers who do the right thing. Its effect is to reduce taxation revenue as well as work opportunities for Australians and those noncitizens with permission to work.

This bill addresses the government's long-held concern about the serious matter of illegal work in Australia and demonstrates the government's determination to tackle the difficult issues associated with this practice. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (16:56): The Migration Amendment (Reform of Employer Sanctions) Bill 2012 seeks to impose an additional regulatory regime on employers employing foreign nationals who are illegal or who do not have work rights. The requirements this bill proposes are, I believe, onerous and unnecessary and are in direct opposition to the coalition's commitment to reduce the regulatory burden and compliance cost on business.

Employers who hire overseas workers are already weighed down by substantial regulations such as those contained in the Migration Legislation Amendment (Worker Protection) Act 2008, and this bill will be yet another imposition on these businesses.

Mr Champion interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order!

Mr McCORMACK: Your government is responsible for allowing so many foreign workers in under various acts.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Riverina will ignore the interjections from the other side of the chamber.

Mr McCORMACK: It is just unbelievable, but I will take your wise advice, Mr Deputy Speaker, and ignore the interjections by the member for Wakefield.

This act provides the Department of Immigration and Citizenship with expanded powers to monitor and investigate possible noncompliance by sponsors and introduce new penalties for
employers who are found to be in breach of their obligations. Officers from the department were given investigative powers to monitor workplaces and conduct site visits. Fines of up to $33,000 were introduced and employer obligations were prescribed which had to be satisfied when employing a temporary overseas worker. A mandatory training requirement for 457 visa holders was introduced in this legislation which effectively amounted to a two per cent payroll tax on employers who engaged temporary overseas workers.

My electorate of Riverina has many of these temporary overseas workers. They work in the abattoirs, they work picking fruit in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and they do lots of other things as well. My Griffith electorate office handles many inquiries about these temporary overseas work arrangements. Combined with the introduction of the temporary skilled migration income threshold, the cost to Australian business of employing temporary overseas workers has become prohibitive. I and my staff member at Griffith hear that regularly. The Migration Act would be amended by this bill to alter criminal offence provisions and create a new civil penalties regime with a maximum fine of $49,500 for corporate entities and $9,900 for individuals, and an infringement notice scheme. It will also broaden the application of criminal offences and civil penalty provisions to people who allow or refer an unlawful noncitizen to work or to work in breach of visa conditions.

Statutory defences will be created where reasonable steps were taken to verify a foreign national worker's entitlement to work and an infringement notice tier will be created under the civil penalties provision, which will allow a person or corporate entity to pay a fine as an alternative to court proceedings. Additionally, the current aggravated offences provision will be amended so that a person commits an aggravated offence where the worker is or will be exploited doing the work and the person who allowed the work or referred the worker knows this or is reckless about it. This bill extends both the criminal and the civil liability in some instances to executive officers of corporate bodies, partners in a partnership and members of an unincorporated association's committee of management, and creates search warrants and notices to produce powers specifically to facilitate the investigation of suspected breaches of these offences and civil penalties.

In 2010, the government engaged Stephen Howell to conduct a review of the Migration Amendment (Employer Sanctions) Act 2007 and in December 2011 the government announced it would legislate to implement the recommendations contained in the review. Currently, the employer sanctions regime, which was introduced by the Howard government in 2007, comprises criminal offences for the following: allowing an unlawful noncitizen to work; allowing a noncitizen to work in breach of a visa condition restricting work; referring an unlawful noncitizen to work; and referring a noncitizen to work in breach of a visa condition restricting work. For a person to be prosecuted of committing one of these offences, it is also required to be shown that the offences were committed with either knowledge or due recklessness. If the worker has been subjected to exploitation, the offence is considered an aggravated offence, as it should be.

Since the implementation of the act in 2007, officers from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship have deliberated about 100 instances of possible breaches. Of these cases, only four were considered suitable to be referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. Due to the low prosecution rate, Howell concluded:

The provisions of the … Act—
as it stood—
are wholly ineffective as a deterrent against the small number of employers and labour suppliers who engage or refer non-citizens who do not have lawful permission to work or who work in breach of their visa conditions. The Employer Sanctions provisions are also ineffective as an educational tool for recalcitrant employers and labour suppliers.

The contradiction in this statement is a feature of the entire report. On one hand there are few breaches and even fewer convictions, yet on the other hand such exceptional behaviour warrants the imposition of an even greater evidentiary and regulatory burden on employers.

Industry groups, including the Australian Industry Group, AiG, and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ACCI, believe the proposed changes are 'heavy-handed and unnecessary'.

Under this bill the statutory defence provisions would require employers to establish, at the commencement of any work performed, that they were shown a valid Australian passport, a valid birth certificate, a valid certificate of permanent residency or a valid visa permitting work. The combined effect of this would mean any employer could be taking a risk of being fined before the court or receiving an infringement notice if they do not check this documentation. This administrative measure on its own is excessive. Furthermore, the process involved to view these documents is not only arduous but inherently discriminatory as it will require employees to reveal their age and place of birth. The need for this information has the potential to lead to discrimination against people who may be legitimate citizens or permanent residents of Australia but will be subject to questioning from their employer due to their race, accent and/or level of English. Due to these concerns, the ACCI has referred the draft legislation to the Australian Human Rights Commission and has informed the government that, if this bill is passed in its current form, the ACCI will seek exemptions under the federal and state discrimination acts to protect its ability to make requests for evidence required under the Migration Act.

The Master Builders Association of Australia made a submission to the Howell report, and, whilst they strongly support tough penalties being applied to those who deliberately exploit illegal workers, it was emphasised that the deliberate procurement of illegal workers for placement jobs in Australia was completely different to the inadvertent backpacker who has overstayed their visa. The law should successfully target those who deliberately seek out illegal workers. The Howell report was unsuccessful in making a case that the extent of illegal work warranted the heavy-handedness of the response. For example, the report stated in 2008-09 that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship located 11,428 unlawful non-citizens in Australia and, of those, only 990 were confirmed to be working illegally. The report also estimated that up to 100,000 people were working illegally in Australia at any one time. That is a staggering statistic. However, these figures are only speculative as it assumes all overstayers are working illegally—and we know that is not correct. The total labour force in Australia is 11.057 million people. So, even if the estimates in the Howell report are accurate, this is less than 0.9 per cent of the total workforce.

The regime which is proposed shifts the cost of compliance and law enforcement directly onto the employer. I was contacted by my constituent Carmel La Rocca of Griffith, who wished to voice her concerns about this bill. Mrs La Rocca believes it is unfair to put the onus of ensuring workers are legal on farmers. As contractors, she believes it should be up to the
contractor to ensure any subcontractors and employees they employ meet the necessary legal requirements to work in Australia. It is completely reasonable for Mrs La Rocca, or indeed any other farmer who uses a contractor, to place their trust in a contractor to employ legal staff. Farmers do not have the time to sit and check all the documentation from contractors of their employees' legal working status.

Whilst they have been advised by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship that there will be ways of doing this online, many farmers are not computer savvy. Many farmers do not want to have that onerous burden of having to go and check every single employee, when they have been told in good faith that that employee is able to work. The Howell report stated:

The cost of addressing this problem cannot be borne solely by Government or the taxpayer and it is impossible to impose the cost on the workers themselves. Australian employers must bear some of the cost and inconvenience by taking reasonable steps to identify the workers they engage or employ and by taking reasonable steps to establish whether those workers have permission to work. Australian citizens must be prepared to bear their share of the cost and inconvenience by obtaining and carrying adequate identification when they seek work.

It is unfathomable that this Labor government can think it is acceptable to place this burden on employers by shifting the cost of enforcing the law onto them.

The coalition has consistently made the point that Australia's migration program is intended as a supplement not a substitute to the Australian workforce—to fill the gaps which have opened up by the way Australia's population has naturally grown. This is at the centre of the coalition's approach to the issues of the 457 temporary work visas and skilled migration. In that context, we have said that we will look at liberalising the 457 visa criteria to create a genuinely temporary and regional solution to skills gaps and shortages without compromising compliance. We will remove the union-driven roadblocks, allowing businesses—they are the people who actually employ people and make money to pay taxes and keep this Labor government in place so it can make all sorts of stupid policies that send us all broke—to quickly access the critical information that they require while also maintaining important safeguards and sanctions against those businesses and individuals who seek to abuse the scheme.

The existing regime and compliance costs the government has systematically built around the employment of foreign nationals are already onerous, and the proposed changes are going to significantly increase the compliance costs for employers as well as leave them to struggle through the complex tangle of red tape.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (17:09): I certainly agree with the comments that have been made by my colleague, the member for Riverina. I rise today to also speak on the Migration Amendment (Reform of Employer Sanctions) Bill 2012. The government states that the purpose of this bill is to reduce the use and exploitation of illegal foreign workers. This is indeed a noble purpose. Any business found to be exploiting workers should be punished accordingly.

The Howard government brought in some very strict rules in 2007 to deal with just this issue. However, it is clear when you look at the detail of this bill that, far from achieving the purpose of the bill, the new regulations and sanctions proposed by the bill are so onerous that they will impose excessive regulatory and compliance costs on all businesses, the vast
majority of which do the right thing. The minister himself acknowledged that the vast majority of businesses do indeed do the right thing.

Why is it significant that this will be so onerous for businesses? Let us examine this question in more detail. The government, in coming into government, claimed that for every regulation it brought in it would get rid of a regulation—a one-in, one-out approach. It also claimed that it would fix the problem of deregulation by simply appointing a minister for deregulation. But these issues are not fixed; the facts do not support its claims.

Since coming to power the Labor government has introduced over 20,000 new regulations. It introduced over 1,000 pages of new regulations with the carbon tax alone. In that same period it removed fewer than 100 regulations. How can businesses be expected to plan, with any sense of certainty, when the goalposts are changed so frequently by this government? And what is the point of having a minister whose main function is to deregulate the economy, when all we see from this government is more red tape, more regulation and more burden?

Like all things this government does and says one must look past the spin and at the reality. This brings me back to the bill before the House—another piece of regulation, another level of bureaucracy and another impost on hardworking Australian businesses. What is it that this government has against Australian businesses? Why does it consistently try to make it harder to do business in this country, not easier? We understand that creating the right regulatory environment is critically important to our nation's future. We understand that removing red tape will increase productivity and, in turn, allow business—the wealth creators of this nation—to thrive and grow.

According to the Productivity Commission red tape represents four per cent of all business costs and red-tape reduction can contribute up to $12 billion to our economy. Don't take my word for it; it was, after all, the current Treasurer who said 'Lifting productivity is essential to the nation's prosperity.' If only this government's actions were consistent with its words. To say this government's record on regulation is atrocious is an understatement. In a recent Global Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum Australia received a massive wake-up call on how we are doing. It showed that we are now ranked 96th in the burden of government regulation compared to 68th in 2007-08, noting that the lower the ranking the worse the burden of government regulation, in this instance. It also showed that we have slumped from 40th to 80th in pay and productivity for the same period. It is little wonder, when the same report showed that Australia had slipped from 12th to 29th in transparency of government policy and, most alarmingly, from a relatively strong position of 10th in wastefulness of government spending to 48th.

When you consider these trends it comes as no surprise to learn that productivity in this country is on the slide. A recent Grattan Institute report reinforced these claims. It showed that since 2007 Australia has experienced a drop in multifactor productivity of 4.2 per cent, while the OECD average remains in positive territory. This may not have an immediate effect on our economy but it does not bode well for our long-term economic outlook. The government should be doing everything it can within its power to introduce policies that address this emerging and alarming trend, not to introduce legislation that will further increase the regulatory burden and ultimately reduce productivity. Why is punishing all business with more red tape so detrimental?
The Business Council of Australia has reported that, compared to the United States, it costs 40 per cent more to operate resource projects in Australia, it is 92 per cent more expensive to build an airport and it costs 62 per cent more for hospitals. Perhaps this would not be such a problem if we lived 100 or 200 years ago, but in today's global economy, where capital is liquid and mobile, business competitiveness is more important than ever. It is essential that government create the regulatory environment that fosters business activity and growth. This legislation, however, is a step in the wrong direction. This legislation is an extra regulatory burden placed on all business, not just on those that are doing the wrong thing. It will further erode competitiveness.

The government may well say: what is one more regulation going to do? What effect will one more piece of legislation have? Let us make it abundantly clear: as previously stated, it is but one of a multitude of regulations introduced since 2007. Increased regulation, as well as having an economic impact, has a human impact.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ACCI, recently conducted their national red-tape survey, and the results were distressing. Almost three-quarters of the 870 businesses that responded said they were spending more time on regulation today than they were just two years ago. Forty-four per cent of businesses are having to spend between one and five hours a week complying with government regulations—filling out forms, applying for permits, reporting business activity at a local, state or federal level. One in three businesses is spending more than five hours a week on regulation, and 11 per cent of those surveyed spent more than 20 hours a week on regulation. This is time that could be better spent on growing businesses, which would be productivity enhancing or, as I said before, it could be time better spent with families, which would be emotionally enhancing.

We know that each piece of regulation comes at a cost. Seventy-three per cent of businesses reported to ACCI that their overall cost of compliance had gone up in the last two years; 42 per cent of businesses estimated they spent more than $10,000 on compliance with regulation. Eighty businesses spent between $50,000 and $100,000. A resounding 60 businesses spent in excess of $100,000 on regulation. About 60 per cent of businesses said red tape had a moderate to major impact on their business; while 54 per cent flagged that the effort taken to comply with regulations had prevented them from making changes to expand or grow their business.

With the extra regulatory burden this legislation places on all businesses, one would hope that the intended beneficiaries would be wide-ranging and vast. But it is not so. According to the Howe report there are approximately 100,000 illegal workers in Australia at any time. When you consider Australia has a workforce of over 11 million people, it means this legislation is relevant to only 0.09 per cent of the workforce. What kind of cost-benefit is that? What is this government saying? It is saying: 'Let's unload another level of administrative burden on all Australian businesses so we can target 0.09 per cent of the workforce.' Once again, the government is using the heavy sledgehammer of regulation when there are better, more targeted ways to achieve its objectives.

But of course this is not the first change the government has made to the temporary migration and skilled migration program. These changes come on top of the regulatory burden already imposed through the introduction of the Migration Legislation Amendment (Worker
Protection) Act 2008, which gave the department of immigration expanded powers to monitor, investigate and penalise employers for non-compliance as a sponsor. That legislation allowed DIAC officers the investigative authority to conduct site visits, monitor workplaces and impose fines of up to $33,000. In addition to this, the legislation imposed compulsory training requirements for 457 visa holders that effectively amounted to a two per cent payroll tax. It is little wonder that business in Australia is becoming so very expensive.

The recent bungled approach to skilled migration at the Roy Hill project highlighted the deep divisions within the government on this issue and just how beholden they are to the union movement. This piece of legislation is yet another example of the confused and contradictory nature of the way the government goes about making regulation. It is difficult for business to adhere to this regulation, given that it will be in conflict with much of the state based antidiscrimination legislation and federal antidiscrimination legislation.

Under this bill, employers need to demand proof of birthplace, gender and age documentation. Under existing state legislation, this could be used down the track as a basis for accusations of discrimination. As a result, ACCI has already referred to draft legislation to the Human Rights Commission and, should the legislation pass, they will be seeking exemptions under both state and federal antidiscrimination acts. It is, again, another example of the incompetence of this government.

The coalition understands the importance that skilled migration plays in our economy. We understand that it is an important component in the labour force to fill in the gaps that we have with certain projects in getting them off the ground. We also understand that it is not a replacement for full-time Australian workers. The coalition cannot support this legislation. It will only increase the regulatory burden to further stifle business and to further stifle productivity, and will certainly not achieve the outcomes and objectives that the government has indeed set for itself.

Debate adjourned.

**Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr Buchholz** (Wright) (17:24): I rise to speak on the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012. Yet again, this government is embarking on desperate and despicable cash grab of the people of Australia's hard-earned cash and future entitlements.

One word comes to mind when we think of the process that has followed this bill into the House: chaos. This government has abused the process in which the manner and timing of this bill was introduced into the parliament. It is imperative that there is sufficient time to understand the impact and potential consequences that this legislation may have on Australians, including on the people of Wright, who I represent, who have unclaimed money in accounts that this bill specifically targets. I have no hesitation in opposing this bill together with my coalition colleagues. I cannot support this bill based on the haste with which this government is moving to act.
The first part of the bill makes amendments to the Banking Act 1959 to provide a new arrangement for unclaimed moneys held by Australian deposit-taking institutions. It was introduced last month at the same time the coalition was receiving its brief on this very bill from staff from the Treasury office. Despite seeking to have this bill referred to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services, the bill was listed for the debate the following day. Why, may I ask? Because of the desperate search for funds that this Treasury needs in its process of cooking the books. It seems as if it is a desperate scramble not that dissimilar to a poverty-stricken household looking to find coins down the back of the couch in order to put a meal on the table.

I want to share with you why the government is pursuing this bill. It goes to the heart of debt and to the heart of this government’s capacity to manage its fiscal affairs. If you add up all of the deficits since 1901, when Edmund Barton was our first Prime Minister, through to 2007, it would come up to $123 billion. Since Labor has come to office—and this is its five-year anniversary—from 2007 to today, they have accumulated deficits of $172 billion more than the $123 billion accumulated by the entire parliament here in Australia. The current debt figure today is $252.9 billion, and borrowings over the last 22 weeks have been in the vicinity of $19 billion. This being the last sitting week for 2012 it is only more obvious that this government is going to do everything it can to rush whatever they can through the House, including this bill.

I really do not know whether to laugh or to be worried by the fact that the debate of bill was adjourned shortly after it was introduced by the government when it realised that it did not have the support of the member for Lynne nor the member for Melbourne for this bill.

The bill before the House seeks to enact various changes to unclaimed money measures which were flagged in the government’s 2012-13 MYEFO and makes amendments to the Banking Act of 1959, the First Home Savers Account Act of 2008, the Life Insurance Act of 1985, the Superannuation (Unclaimed Money and Lost Members) Act of 1999, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act of 2001 and the Corporations Act of 2001.

Specifically, these amendments will impact arrangements relating to the transfer of unclaimed moneys to the Australian Securities and Investment Commission for bank accounts and life insurance policies, lost members’ accounts at the Australian Taxation Office for superannuation, and unclaimed moneys for companies’ moneys.

The bill effectively brings forward the time in which money is recognised under the relevant law as lost or unclaimed, which will in turn have an effect of moving approximately $700 million into the 2012-13 fiscal year—$700 million of Australian's money, which is going to be used on the balance sheet as if it is a government asset. Well, it will not be; it will still be the property of the Australian people as unclaimed money but it is an element of accounting trickery which this government has reduced itself to in order to try and maintain a wafer-thin surplus. These changes will reduce the period before an amount payable by an Australian deposit-taking institution is treated as unclaimed moneys from seven years to three. This change has potentially widespread unintended consequences for many Australians, and this government should not be allowed to get away with ad-hoc action that has such a perverse impact on society.

So today I am clear what this bill does. If an Australian worker who has money sitting in a bank account, and perhaps has decided to venture overseas or choose to leave money in that
account accumulating interest, does not make any further deposits or withdrawals for that period of time, they will have their deposit treated, after that three-year mark, as unclaimed moneys. These funds will be moved to the government's own account, known as the Consolidated Revenue Fund. This is a terrible result for many Australians with untouched funds in their bank accounts.

The unintended consequences of this bill—and I say this with my hand to my heart, without any political rhetoric—is that we will potentially have Australians, elderly and young, rather than being encouraged to save and put money into their bank accounts, taking their money out of the banks and not use the safety net of the banks and go back to the old ways when they had no traditional security in the banking sector and put it in a Milo tin, put it under the bed or bury it in the backyard.

Before I go any further, I want to bring to the parliament's attention the important task we as members of parliament have when discussing legislation like this—because we have not had time to discuss the unintended consequences of this bill. As the member for Wright I am constantly reminded that I need to work hard towards ensuring the people of Wright will benefit from better lives and higher standards of living through higher productivity throughout the economy. But I cannot help but think of the bureaucratic nightmare those who encounter this poorly thought-out administrative change will face.

To highlight the administrative nightmare, I took the opportunity when reading this bill to go onto the Australian Taxation Office website and download the unclaimed superannuation money non-lodgement advice, because I thought it would have been an easy job of just picking the phone up and saying, 'I'm back in the country' or 'I want to try and transfer this over'—but there was nothing short of seven pages of information and data to fill out. The one that got me was the part of the download that went to the type of superannuation provider—and you could only select one. You had to nominate your superannuation account and whether or not it fell under the category of (1) retirement savings account, (2) industry or award superannuation, (3) employer sponsored or a corporate superannuation fund, (4) public offer or retail superannuation fund, (5) a small Australian prudential regulatory authority fund, (6) an exempt public sector scheme, (7) a public sector fund on eligible rollover fund—or, if you did not have anything that plugged into any one of those, you could touch 'other'. So, if someone has an amount of, say, $2,000 sitting in there, it is not feasible that someone could spend nearly $2,000 on accountants or their solicitors trying to work out which one of those categories they fell into simply to have those funds returned.

The next part of this bill amends the First Home Saver Account, active from 2008, to provide new arrangements for unclaimed moneys held by the First Home Saver Account providers. The new law amends section 17(a) and 15(c) of the FHSA Act to change the unclaimed money period from seven years to three, similar to the amendment before. The government announces the introduction of the First Home Saver Account in the 2008-09 budget. As many members of the House will be aware, the First Home Saver Account is a relatively new measure, with many parents having established these accounts for their kids—and it was a good idea. But they have not been able to make contributions in recent times, particularly with the rising costs of living, not to mention the impost of the carbon tax. This amendment will mean that some of these accounts will be at risk of being claimed by the government. So if mum and dad were trying to save money to put into a deposit account for
their kids and have not had the opportunity over the last couple of years, because they were finding it tough or dad had lost his job, that will just get sucked into the vacuum. This amendment will mean that some of these accounts will be at risk of being claimed by the government, particularly where holders of these accounts have not been able to afford to contribute to the deposits over the past three years and have not been in contact with their bank which holds their deposit.

It is obvious from the plain and simple facts that this bill and the government are out of touch with the people of Australia, not to mention the constituents of Wright. I can only imagine the response I will get next time I walk through Beaudesert, Boonah, Grantham, Mount Tamborine or Mudgerahab in my electorate to speak to some of those constituents who are potentially going to lose their funds. Why this government has not sent this bill to the parliamentary inquiry lends itself to the question: what are the members of this Labor government trying to achieve? And do they fully understand the potential implications on Australians? I can only hope that their constituents are informed enough to make the right decisions at the next election.

Schedule 3 of this bill amends the Life Insurance Act 1995 to provide for new arrangements for unclaimed life insurance monies. Life insurance companies, within the meaning of Life Insurance Act, are currently required to report and pay any unclaimed monies to the Commonwealth. This new arrangement will reduce for the period of life insurance monies to be treated as unclaimed monies from seven years to three-year period. It is not clear how these provisions will apply to contemporary life insurance products or policies because the government has not had time to develop legislation properly. It would be nothing short of unacceptable if I did not say that it is yet another reason why parliamentary scrutiny of this bill is required. What happens to a policy of a deceased person? Is it then up to the public trustee office to go and search for unclaimed monies which fall into that three-year bracket? I suggest that there will not be a great amount of motivation, and that as a consequence life insurance policies will be not be enacted if a family member was not aware that there was one there.

The final part of this bill that I speak to today amends the Superannuation (Unclaimed Money and Lost Members) Act 1999. The amendment changes arrangements for the transfer of lost members' accounts to the Commissioner of Taxation and to provide the payment of interest of unclaimed superannuation money. Quite simply, what this means is that lost superannuation accounts with balances of less than $2,000 that have up until now been inactive for only three years, and accounts for unidentifiable members which have been inactive for 12 months, will now be required to be paid to the Tax Office. The majority of the amendments moved from seven to three years, while this particular one on cash moves from three years to 12 months.

The coalition accepts the justification for the increase of the threshold from $200 for small account balances to $2,000. They are increasing the threshold from $200 to $2,000—that is around the level where the account erosion becomes less likely. However, this tenfold increase to the threshold makes it much more critical that existing problems in the current regulations are resolved.

In relation to the increase from $200 to $2,000, you will hear members from the government side saying, They would have lost their money anyway. If we did not take it, it
would have been eroded by bank charges and fees.' Once it gets to the $2,000 mark, the interest-bearing component on $2,000 well and truly offsets. So that will not be an argument or a debate that could be used against this particular measure. Many of these problems did not appear to have been considered while producing the bill, but will now be in real need of redress.

I concur with my colleagues in recommending that the amendments to schedule 4 of the bill be delayed until 31 December 2013 in order to address the critical issue raised since the announcement of the measures, and to align the timing of their implementation with that of the autoconsolidation process under the SuperStream reforms due on 1 January 2014.

It is with disappointment that I speak on this bill. I say this because I know the silent majority of the people of Wright, who I represent, have not been treated fairly in the due process that they so desperately deserve. But I am convinced that by speaking on this bill, the people of Wright can be assured that I am trying to do everything I can to ensure their personal savings. It is clear that the rushed time lines and implementation of this bill have been driven by nothing more than a desperate government trying to pretend that it can deliver a surplus—the surplus that is in fact generated through increased revenues from this particular bill. If this bill does not get up, the surplus is at risk.

Furthermore, I am convinced that I have never seen a bill that so blatantly impedes the life of the Australian people and my people of Wright, and that is such a direct contradiction to the integrity and trust of this parliament that we are all trusted to hold on to. I cannot emphasise enough the need to exercise caution in making changes to this act, and I concur with my coalition colleagues in not supporting, or not facilitating a government that is acting on self-interest as opposed to properly considering public policy.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (17:37): I rise to speak on the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012. Here we go again: another flawed, rushed and ill-considered bill introduced into this parliament by this failed government. I support the comments from the member for Wright. I say this because I know the silent majority of the people of Wright, who I represent, have not been treated fairly in the due process that they so desperately deserve. But I am convinced that by speaking on this bill, the people of Wright can be assured that I am trying to do everything I can to ensure their personal savings. It is clear that the rushed time lines and implementation of this bill have been driven by nothing more than a desperate government trying to pretend that it can deliver a surplus—the surplus that is in fact generated through increased revenues from this particular bill. If this bill does not get up, the surplus is at risk.

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circumstances in which lost and unidentifiable superannuation accounts must be transferred to
the government. The amendments will increase the account balance threshold below which
accounts are deemed as lost and are required to be transferred, from $200 up to $2,000.
Further, the amendments will decrease the period of inactivity before accounts of
unidentifiable members must be transferred to the ATO from five years to just 12 months.
Schedule 5 amends the Corporations Act 2001 and the Australian Securities and Investments
Commission Act 2001 to close the Companies and Unclaimed Moneys Special Account and
establish new processes for the receipt and payment of unclaimed moneys.

To start with, what problem does this bill seek to address? Where are the members of the
public or the industry lobby groups out there calling for the changes in these bills? What is the
mischief, what is the evil that these bills are seeking to remedy? We have heard the
mendacious, the deceptive and untruthful arguments contained in the explanatory
memorandum of this bill that these bills are actually designed to prevent the erosion of small
or lost or inactive account balances, or to reunite unclaimed balances with their owners. But
we all know the truth about this bill, and the truth is that it is simply being rushed into the
House in nothing more than a desperate attempt by this government to try to deliver a pretend
surplus. Half of this government's promised surplus for 2012-2013, this financial year, is to be
achieved through the revenue from this bill, basically, which is simply taking money from the
accounts of Australians and putting it into government coffers. In just the six months from 31
December this year to 30 June, this government will raise $760 million in additional revenue
simply by taking that money from the accounts of hardworking Australians and transferring it
to government coffers. What a desperate need for cash to preserve this complete illusion of a
surplus! We are going to see the raid on children's and pensioners' bank accounts. We are
going to see the raid on superannuation accounts of workers, with $760 million transferred
from their accounts into government coffers.

And where is this money being put? Is it being put in a safe place so workers and
pensioners and children can claim this money at a later stage? No. This money is already
being spent. It is being spent to try to shore up this dodgy $1.1 billion surplus—the complete
illusion which we all know will never eventuate. It will just be the facade ticking on for
months to come.

Why is the government in such a desperate situation for cash? Why do they need to raid
$760 million from the accounts of children and pensioners and workers? We all know:
because this government has put together the four largest deficits in our nation's history. The
four largest deficits in our nation's history combined are $172 billion of accumulated
surpluses and we all know they are on track to deliver the fifth budget deficit in a row. This is
a government that has not cracked it for a surplus in the last 21 years, and here we have the
complete facade of a $1.1 billion surplus. We know the importance of this $172 billion
surplus. We often hear the term, 'We are returning the budget to surplus,' and that is why this
bill is being rushed through parliament. But what is actually happening out there is that we
still have that $172 billion net deficit over the last four years and then, if we even deliver it,
we have $1.1 billion surplus. Of the last five years we will have net deficits of this
government over five years of $171 billion. As for this surplus, if it is achieved—this great
surplus with all these accounting fudges, taking money from children and pensioners and
workers' superannuation accounts to get this phoney figure—to undo the damage of that $172
billion deficit it would take the current $1.1 billion surplus to be done year after year for 170 years. That is how deep this government has got us in the red.

Some of the real concerns about this bill are to do with timing; it is rushed and unrealistic. We have heard from the Australian Bankers Association, which has described the deadline to apply the new rules to inactive accounts—taking it to just three years—as not feasible and without unreasonable risk of mistakes, extra compliance costs and even a complete shutdown of our banking system for a day or two near Christmas to comply with the government’s requirements. They said in their submission:

The ABA notes that the proposed timing for implementation and a commencement of 31 December 2012 is unrealistic, being in less than 2 months and falling during a period when banks implement freezes on any technology or IT systems changes. It is estimated that banks and other ADIs will require at least 6 months to make all the necessary changes, inform customers in a legally compliant manner, and meet compliance requirements.

In short, the Australian Bankers Association has argued that, even if we bring this bill in, a 12-month transitional period is required to ensure the legal, technical and practical issues can be addressed. But we know why the 12-month period cannot be applied. This bill is not about good government. It is not about good legislation. It is about trying to patch up a dodgy surplus for this financial year.

Amending the seven-year period—one which has been in the Banking Act for many years—down to three years of so-called inactivity of unclaimed money is a terrible, bad mistake. Three years is far too short a time. Think back in time: this government has run almost three years, although I am sure many Australians will think that is far too long a time. Just think of that three-year period.

But what happens to an Australian who has a posting overseas and leaves some money in their bank account here in Australia? When they come back after three years they will find that the government has taken their money. What happens to a young person that goes travelling for three years after they leave school or university? After three years they will come back and find the money they set aside for when they came back has been taken by the government. What about children? A grandparent might set up a bank account for their grandson or granddaughter. They may put aside a modest amount in the bank account and set that aside, thinking that money was safe, but in three years it will be gone—the government will grab it. What about pensioners? Many people when they retire might put a small nest egg away in the bank account, thinking that money is safe, relying on their pension and keeping that for an emergency, an operation or medical treatment. They will wake up three years later and find out that their money is gone—the government has grabbed it. That is what this bill does.

And what does this do to our trust in our banking system? As the member for Wright said, we do not want people hiding their money under their mattress. We need a banking system in which people have trust, where they can put their money in the bank knowing when they go back to that bank their money will be there. But, if this bill passes, within three years they will go back to their bank and find out the government has taken it if they have not put any more funds in.

Why the three-year period? Where are the studies? Where is the research that shows that three years is the right time? Why not four years, or five or six? We think that three-year
period has been selected because that will bring in the greater slice of revenue for the government to fix up its dodgy budget surplus. The coalition will propose some amendments to remedy the many flaws in this bill. Firstly, regarding bank accounts for customers, we need to make sure that further consultation takes place. We want to ensure that the banks and other financial institutions should not see these changes rushed in and expose their customers to mistakes, inconvenience and additional cost. There should be, if this government is about good legislation, no need for this rush.

Secondly, we need to review this three-year inactivity test for bank accounts. Would four, five or six years be better? Should there be any change from the current seven years? There is simply no research, there have been no studies, and that is why extra time is needed. We also need to look at the changes so that, where an account is found to be inactive, that inactivity test should be applied to all the account holder's accounts, at the customer level, to test if that customer has other accounts. If at least one of those other accounts is active, then it is clear that that is not an inactive account, and the government should not take that money.

We also need to look at the threshold for protection of small amounts which has been increased to a $2,000 limit. This limit is too great an increase from the current $200 amount. The shortcomings in this legislation could be addressed if there were further consultation and consideration of the coalition's amendments to ensure sound objectives in reducing account balance erosion and to ensure that lost balances can be reunited with their owners without all these unintended consequences. That is why the coalition will introduce amendments to delay the implementations of schedules 1, 2 and 4 for at least a full 12 months. Let's do the work; let's do the consultation; let's make sure there are no unintended consequences. We know the reason the government will not support that. That will have the effect of delaying the government taking $600 million from the accounts of children and pensioners and from the superannuation of council workers and transferring it into their pockets. This is bad legislation. It has been done through a bad process. It has been rushed and is an embarrassment to this government. It should either be opposed or the coalition's amendments accepted.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (17:52): I rise to speak after my good friend the member for Hughes. I congratulate him on his speech, and I also congratulate the member for Wright who spoke so eloquently before him. Once again, what we are seeing with this bill is that the government, sadly, does not know how to implement policy. It gets a political idea and then the policy flows from that political idea. The trouble is, by the time it has the political idea, it is in trouble. So you have a rushed policy and then, even worse, you have the implementation of the policy rushed.

We have seen lessons, already, over the last two years of what this can bring about. If there has ever been a lesson that everyone in this country should learn from it was the live export debacle where the government thought they had a political problem. They rushed out a policy, they implemented the policy and we have an industry still on its knees as a result. What we have to be careful of here is the unintended consequence, because the devil is always in the detail. Once again, we have had the political problem and the perception in the community that the government cannot manage money. It is a real one, and the reason for it is we have had the four biggest budget deficits in Australia's history. And what is that doing? That is keeping interest rates high because the Reserve Bank cannot move to lower interest rates
because they have got to keep an eye on the government or on Wayne's wasteful spending. They cannot bring interest rates down to an international comparative level where we would not see so much money pouring into the country to take advantage of it. As we know, the rest of the world is in deep recession. So they have interest rates that are extremely low. We need to get ours down. We need to keep some pressure on the dollar to bring it down, to help our farmers, to help our manufacturers, to help everyone outside of the mining industry, mainly, so that they can benefit more from a lower dollar.

This is the political problem, and the government, in the 2012-13 MYEFO, thought: 'We have to try to get the budget back into surplus. We have a political problem and we have a real economic problem because of the four years of the largest budget deficits in Australia's history.' So the government sits down and thinks: 'What would be the economically sensible way to do this? What policies should we put in place to bring the budget back into line? Should we take sensible decisions which might cost us because it means reining in all our wasteful spending? Or do we try to use the cloak-and-dagger approach, try to disguise things and use some tricky ways to try and get it sorted?' Unfortunately, what this bill is showing is that the government is looking at the tricky ways. Because this bill has been brought in in such a rushed manner, we are starting to see that there could be implementation issues.

Let's not beat around the bush here: changing all these policies from seven years to three years is designed to give the government $700 million in extra revenue this financial year, to try to help get that budget into surplus; $700 million is a lot of money when you are aiming for only a wafer-slim budget surplus. In doing this, instead of following proper process—having a proper review, bringing stakeholders in, engaging with them and trying to understand what could be some of the implications—they have just made it up as it has gone along.

The sad thing about this is: who, potentially, will suffer as a result? Is it likely to be the government? No. It will be the Australian taxpayer. Some of the unintended consequences that we are worried about are that Australian taxpayers could inadvertently have money taken from their accounts. There are number of ways that this can happen. I would like to go into those.

What are the three schedules of the bill? First, there is the banking element of it. Schedule 1 of this bill calls for changes to section 69 of the Banking Act to provide for new arrangements for unclaimed moneys held by Australian deposit-taking institutions, ADIs. These changes will reduce the period before an amount payable by a ADI is treated as unclaimed monies from seven years to three years.

The potential consequences of that are many and varied, but let's just take a simple one. This is why we wanted the policy looked at; so we could explore this and ensure that this type of thing would not occur if, like me, for instance, you had an overseas posting. They last three years. Often they can be extended for a year to four years. You leave money sitting in a bank account in Australia while you are overseas on that posting. You could find that money that you left while you were overseas serving your country—and think for a moment about military personnel who often go overseas for extended periods—has been taken off you. If you do not make any further deposits or withdrawals for that period, under this bill, it would seem—and I am hoping we will hear the government clarify this; it would have been good for it to be done properly through a review—those funds would be taken from you and they
would end up in the government's own account. This is almost Orwellian. That you would have a government that would just come in and suck money out of a private account because it has not been active for three years is Orwellian. I cannot understand why the government would want to head down this path. Surely they must realise that that is not their money and that, just because someone wants to leave money in an account for three years and not touch it, the government has no right to be able to reach in and rip it out. That is not the type of government we want in this country. I am hoping that we will see clarification of that from the government. It is the sort of thing that should have been examined under a proper committee process—but that has not occurred. So I am hoping that, before they rush this bill through to a vote, we will get some sort of explanation around that.

What does schedule 2 of the bill show us? It amends the First Home Saver Accounts Act 2008. So this is amending a bill that this government brought in to provide for new arrangements for unclaimed moneys held by the first home saver account providers. The new law amends section 17A and 51C of the act to change the unclaimed moneys period from seven years to three years.

Let us go back a little bit and have a look at this. The government announced the introduction of the first home saver account in the 2008-09 budget—so a relatively new measure introduced by this government. So you would think, for a start, that they could have got it right. You would think that they had probably looked at it all and thought: 'In introducing this legislation, let's make sure that we get everything right. Let's take time and make sure we get it right.' Yet 2½ years later they are looking at this and saying, 'No, we didn't get the detail right,' because some of these accounts are now at risk of being claimed by the government, particularly where holders of these accounts have not been able to afford to contribute to their deposits over the past three years.

We have had the GFC and we have had cost-of-living pressures which this government have not been able to bring under control—as a matter of fact, they have exacerbated them—and people are struggling to put money into these first home saver accounts. If they do not put any money in for three years, this Orwellian government once again, it would seem, can reach in and grab that money. It is very strange that they would be wanting to do this—introducing a policy in 2008-09 and then changing the regulations around it so that the government can now take money out of accounts that they were encouraging people to put money into. I just cannot fathom it. Surely there must be better ways to balance a budget, after producing four of the biggest budget deficits in Australia's history. Surely there must be better ways to do it.

Schedule 3, life insurance, amends section 216 of the Life Insurance Act to provide for the new arrangements for unclaimed life insurance moneys. Currently life insurance companies within the meaning of the act are required to report on and pay unclaimed moneys to the Commonwealth. There are two limbs to the definition of unclaimed moneys in the act. Unclaimed moneys include sums payable on the maturity of a policy which are not claimed within seven years after the maturity date of the policy. The new arrangements will reduce the period before life insurance moneys are treated as unclaimed moneys from seven to three years. Once again we see the reduction of the time frame and it will allow the government to step in and take that money.

Surely there must be a process that is put in place to make sure that everything has been done to ensure that people have not left the money there for their own perfectly valid reasons,
that they want the accounts left alone, that they want the money to sit there. People have the right to do that. If I have a bank account and I want to leave money in there for more than three years—I do not want to add to it and I do not want to subtract from it—surely I have the right to do that and not be worried that a government is going to step in and take the money.

Schedule 4 of the bill amends the Superannuation (Unclaimed Money and Lost Members) Act to change arrangements for the transfer of lost member accounts to the Commissioner of Taxation and to provide for the payment of interest on unclaimed superannuation money. Lost super accounts with balances of less than $2,000 that have until now been active for only three years—currently this is seven years—and accounts of unidentifiable members that have been inactive for 12 months will now be required to be paid to the Australian Taxation Office. Once again we see, quite clearly, the government is stepping in and changing the rules so that it can benefit—in this case, so it can get access to people's superannuation. So people work hard, pay their super and, for some reason, they might decide, 'I'm going to leave that super there. I'm not going to touch for a while,' and what happens: the government can help itself.

There is also schedule 5, which deals with the Corporations Act. Once again, what we are seeing is the government manipulating the rules and the law so it is easier for the government to get hold of private citizens' money. I will not go through the details because I am running out of time, but, once again, I could set forth what the process is. This is changing longstanding pillars of our financial services industry. These changes should not be made in a rush; they should be made for a good reason and under proper scrutiny. They are enabling this government to access money from private citizens. What this government are trying to do with this bill seems Orwellian in nature. Their justification for it is poor, because if they had not wasted taxpayers' money over the last four years, like they have, there would be no need for it. Unless it is amended, we will oppose this bill and be right in doing so.

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (18:07): I rise to speak to the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012. This is an extraordinary bill. The reason it is an extraordinary bill is that, in essence, this is a fig leaf to cover the Treasurer's rather unfortunate situation—that is, this is a government that, as we know, inherited a budget surplus in excess of $20 billion and over $70 billion in net savings, and as a consequence, largely, not exclusively, of very poor policy decisions, has now squandered all of those assets and savings that the previous, coalition government put in place and has racked up over $140 billion of net public debt. That is a consequence of this Labor government's typical ineptitude when it comes to economic stewardship, this government's inability to balance a budget, reduce debt and decrease spending and this government spending like there is no tomorrow. In the face of continued economic circumstances being unfavourable globally, we have a government that, also as a consequence of their policy decisions, are now facing a situation where they are looking straight down the barrel of running another huge budget deficit.

The last four budget deficits have been the biggest deficits in Australia's history. The government would say, 'The reason these deficits have been so big is that we have had to stimulate the Australian economy,' notwithstanding that we are above average trend when it comes to the level of economic growth and notwithstanding that we are in the part of the globe which has enjoyed the strongest continued and sustained period of economic growth. Instead, we have a government that has been out there promising so many things to so many different people in an attempt to counter its very poor stewardship. That is why we have seen,
for example, announcements with respect to the NDIS, announcements with respect to Gonski and an announcement with respect to health funding.

Because the government is staring down the barrel of another massive budget deficit, this government is desperately doing whatever it can to claw back revenue. So we get to today's bill, the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill. To those that are no doubt going to be reading and enjoying the *Hansard* on this debate, as they thumb their way through the pages of the *Hansard*, wondering what Wayne Swan, the member for Lilley, was thinking with this bill, let me make it crystal clear. I certainly know that constituents in my electorate, on the Gold Coast, are very concerned about the approach that has been adopted by someone who, in my view, is a Treasurer with a serious amount of ineptness but who, for some unknown reason, others seem to herald as the world's greatest treasurer.

This particular bill has a number of schedules to it, but in particular I would like to focus on the first schedule. The first schedule to this bill amends legislation with respect to so-called unclaimed bank accounts. It reduces unclaimed bank accounts from a period of inactivity of seven years down to a period of inactivity of three years. The consequence of this is this: money that is deposited into a bank account which has no activity on it for a period—under this bill now—of three years will be taken by the government and placed in the consolidated revenue. It is only through a high level of proactive effort from the person who has lost that money to consolidated revenue that they would be eligible to get that money back. I would also add an important qualifier—for them to get that money back in terms of the original principal plus CPI.

Now contrast that with the fact that currently the existing threshold for account inactivity is seven years. So the Labor government is moving it from seven years of inactivity to three years of inactivity, and the consequence is that there is a bottom line boost to the budget of some $660 million, basically half—in fact more than half—of the forecast budget surplus. So Wayne Swan has this fig leaf that he dangles about, because he knows that there is, in fact, an embarrassing budget deficit there. The member for Lilley, the Treasurer, is amending the legislation to raise an extra $660 million.

The point as well is that it does not allow for changes in circumstances. Say, for example—and this is one of the proposals that the coalition is putting forward—someone had two or three bank accounts. They may, in fact, have an offset account. People would be familiar with the concept of an offset account. It is an opportunity to park some cash to offset your home loan borrowings. People will often leave money in those accounts because they want to redraw that money down so they get the benefit of offsetting the interest payable on their mortgage account but by the same token they are not obligated to leaving that money sitting on the mortgage account and can withdraw it from that account at any particular time. It almost beggars belief that the government is so desperate for cash that it would look at capturing money in offset accounts as part of its attempt to raise $660 million of additional revenue, even though other accounts that are attached to the offset account are active. That is why the coalition has very reasonably said that the legislation should be amended. It should not be rushed in this way. Australians should not have their money that they have worked for taken by a Labor government that is obsessed with getting as much cash as it possibly can in as quick a time period as it possibly can because the member for Lilley, the Treasurer, is so
desperate to prop up a budget that is eroding. We see this situation arise where the government is turning its back on the coalition's amendment even though it makes perfect sense. Amend the legislation so that individual accounts are not looked at but rather individuals are looked at. If an individual has three or four accounts, they should be looked at in toto, not individually. As I said, an offset account is simply the clearest example that one could come up with.

Another example of just how desperate this government is is in the MYEFO, the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook. This government, in MYEFO, raced through this change in an attempt to prop up its budget bottom line. This was a point made clear by the Australian Bankers' Association in their submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Corporations where they said:

… the proposed timing for implementation and a commencement of 31 December 2012 is unrealistic, being in less than two months and falling during a period when banks implement freezes on any technology or IT systems changes. It is estimated that banks and other ADIs will require at least six months to make all the necessary changes, inform customers in a legally compliant manner and meet compliance requirements.

That is what the ABA says. The situation is extraordinary. The government is ignoring the advice of the ABA, saying to banks, 'No, you must be compliant within two months.' Why? Because it is good public policy? No, not because it has anything to do with good public policy. This is done for one reason and one reason alone: a desperate government that is trying to grab as much cash as it can as quickly as it can because it does not want to go into an election year facing yet another massive budget deficit. That is the reason why we see the Treasurer stand up and make claims: 'We've got an aim; we've got a plan; we've got a vibe; we've got an inkling; we've got a general plan to have a desire to reach a budget surplus at some point.' What the government does not have is the discipline and the wherewithal to effectively steward the Australian economy in a way that delivers a budget surplus. The problem is compounded when you see days like today, when the Minister for Health heralds the fact that the government is spending an additional $4 billion in the health sector. The government talks and crows about its vision when it comes to the NDIS—as we saw from the minister for FaHCSIA today during question time—and the government continues to spend obscene amounts of money on the NBN.

The consequence of all of these factors is that this government now has liabilities forecast to be around $120 billion to the year 2020, all of which are unfunded. A further $120 billion of unfunded announcements by this Labor government builds on the already $145 billion of net public debt—which saw the erosion of $70 billion of net savings which the former coalition government left to it—so that, in total, this glorious Labor Party that Australia has had to shoulder for the last five years has managed to spend roughly $350 billion more than this government has. That is the legacy of the Australian Labor Party. This bill is nothing but a prop to try to pretend that this is a government that in some way knows what it is doing. The greatest travesty—the most shameful aspect of this government's spending spree and this government's inability to control its promises and its spending—is that it is tomorrow's generations, the Aussie kids of today, who are going to have to pay off the $350 billion that this government has spent, money that it simply does not have.
Consistent with past form of a government that is so desperate to make announcements to try to buy its way back into office at the next election, we have a government that makes the announcements without the funding, and now we have a government that is prepared to take people's money away from them with only two months notice because it desperately needs to raise $660 million as part of its attempt to deliver a so-called surplus of a billion dollars. In addition to that, in schedule 2 of the bill the government is amending from seven years down to three years the inactivity test for the first home saver accounts—again, another four-year reduction which unreasonably increases the risks of unintended consequences. Again, the Australian Bankers Association at the brief hearing of the Senate Standing Committee on Economics stated:

… customers generally find these accounts—

that is, first home saver accounts—

and the restrictions and conditions confusing. Applying the unclaimed money provisions would add additional complexity, especially given the 4 year qualifying rule. Similarly to fixed products—

such as term facilities and deposits—

we consider that any new unclaimed monies provisions should only apply to at-call account types which satisfy the definition for inactivity.

So again there is the extraordinary circumstance where the government, so keen to get their hands on the cash, are willing to throw away good public policy.

Schedule 3 amends from seven years to three years the inactivity test for matured insurance policies. Schedule 4—and this is perhaps the most galling part of the amendment to the bill—also amends the Superannuation (Unclaimed Money and Lost Members) Act 1999 to change the circumstances in which lost and unidentifiable superannuation accounts must be transferred to the government. Now a lost member, for the purposes of this bill, as defined under the superannuation industry's supervision regulations, includes, for example—and I am quoting one of the provisions—'the member is uncontactable'. That is, the provider has never had an address for the member, or two written communications to the member—or one written communication if the trustee so chooses—has been returned to the provider unclaimed. In other words, for those millions of Australians who do not take an active interest in their superannuation, who may have received a letter and had it returned, or who may not have received a single letter, their money can now be transferred to the government as being unclaimed. Again, it is a disgrace when it comes to good public policy, and it is done for one reason only: to prop up this government's budget bottom line.

On every level the government should accept the coalition's amendments and, if it fails to accept the amendments that we have put forward—sound, good policy based amendments—then this bill ought to be rejected. In essence, this bill does nothing except try to prop up a government that has shamefully wasted $350 billion and has put the next generation of Aussie kids in debt. Rather than introducing bills like this, it should focus on governing for the betterment of Australia.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (18:22): I rise today to join with my colleague the member for Moncrieff in opposing this appalling piece of government legislation, the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012. I think the reason we do not see a conga line of Labor MPs lauding the great vision of the Gillard
government in this regard is that we all know what is really going on in relation to this legislation. This is a shameful grab for money because the budget is broken. The usual looters who like to come in here and laud the vision of the Gillard government in doing this or doing that are not here today. They are not here to tell us about what a great and glorious policy measure this is, because this is not a great and glorious policy measure. In fact, they know it is a very ugly measure indeed, symptomatic of our often quoted saying from the Liberal side of politics that Labor cannot manage money. Indeed, even the Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation, who often in the House of Representatives lauds the government as the best friend that superannuation has ever had, is not here to tell us in relation to this unclaimed money measure that this government is the best friend that superannuation ever had. You really do not want friends like that—friends who are willing to take away your super accounts and your earnings, knowing that you may be financially impeded by not receiving a higher rate of interest, giving you a cut-price rate, a Bill Shorten rate.

There are serious concerns with this legislation that I want to turn to, in particular in relation to many of the different areas that will be covered by the government's amendments to the Banking Act, the First Home Savers Account Act, the Life Insurance Act, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act and the Corporations Act. So many pieces of Commonwealth legislation being amended ought to clearly flag that there is an issue with this legislation. Let us take the example of the First Home Saver Accounts, an issue that is emblematic of this government's approach to managing money. In 2008 the government said they were going to create First Home Saver Accounts. They said we need to boost national savings for young people, we need to give them a head start in getting their first home, and these First Home Saver Accounts will be particularly beneficial. It is a relatively new measure, but let us say that so far it has not been an unqualified success, although some people have benefited from it and used this new measure wisely. We certainly do not know enough about it. But for the government to say three years later that it would take those first home accounts back from people if they did not use them was, I think, a very odd policy setting indeed. It was like saying, 'We want you to save for a home'—and who can save for a home in three years or four years—but if you do not do something with this account we are going to take it off you and pay you a lower rate than you might obtain in the marketplace and certainly a lower rate than the First Home Saver Accounts qualify for.' This was a very odd approach to the government's own measures. They were basically sending two signals to people: 'if you get these First Home Saver Accounts you'll get a good deal' and 'don't hold your money in these accounts too long without doing anything with it because we will take it back and pay you less'. That to me is emblematic of what is going wrong with this legislation.

If the government were serious about this they would consider the opposition amendments to this bill to increase the time of inactivity. There is no exact science on this, but we are at least trying to suggest that a greater period is necessary in relation to this legislation. We understand how to manage money and we understand that the psychology of the settings that you put in place from government are serious. If you are trying to get people to put money into these First Home Saver Accounts but you say, 'In three years your money might have gone back to the government at a lower rate anyway,' I think you are sending very distinct and different signals that will penalise what you trying to do.
This is very ugly indeed. There is certainly no justification for the three-year inactivity test that we find in this legislation. There is no justification from the government as to why it is three years. We know why it is three years. We can all make the assumption that the three years is related to the fact that the government needs to get its hands on that money as quickly as possible. Three years must be the optimum time for the maximum amount of revenue that is out there. It is because the government needs the cash to make the budget balance. I know that many members opposite would agree with me that there are many types of accounts that should be excluded from this. Certainly it is not understandable why First Home Saver Accounts have been included in this legislation, being such a new measure; it does not make any sense whatsoever. But there are plenty of other kinds of deposits and other interest-bearing accounts where people are being paid more than the CPI and people are going to get a higher interest rate if their money is left alone. Again, what is the signal we are seeing from the government? Savings become a little more risky out there in people's minds: 'Should I leave my money alone in savings for a period of time? Maybe the government will come for it! Is it okay to lock it up and get a higher rate, to put my savings aside and build on a firm foundation?' Well, maybe not, because maybe Wayne Swan is going to come calling. Maybe the best friend that superannuation has ever had in this government, Bill Shorten, is going to be your best friend and rock up and say, 'I'd like to get my hands on that account.' Well that is what is happening here.

We are all laughing, but this is not really very funny. This is actual legislation. These are amendments to all of the serious financial acts in Commonwealth law. We are very concerned about these measures. Without going on unduly, all of my colleagues have outlined the details of our concern about all the different schedules. There are very real reasons why we should oppose this legislation. It is not just because we know the intent behind it; we know that the government are desperate to get their hands on the money; it also because they have included a series of types of accounts which ought not to be included because they have come up with arbitrary time frames which may discourage saving and further damage the progress of our economy.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Windsor): It being 6.30, in accordance with standing order 192 the debate is interrupted.

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce) (18:29): I move:

That further proceedings on the bill be conducted in the House.

Question agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

White Ribbon Day

Debate resumed on the motion by Mr Hayes:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) 25 November is observed as White Ribbon Day, a day aimed at preventing violence against women through a nation-wide campaign to raise public awareness of the issue; and

(b) the current statistics indicate that one in three women will experience physical violence and one in five will experience sexual violence over their lifetime;
(2) encourages:

(a) all Australian men to challenge the attitudes and behaviours that allow violence to continue, by joining the 'My Oath Campaign' and taking the oath: 'I swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women'; and

(b) Members to show their support for the principals of the White Ribbon Day by taking the oath and wearing a white ribbon or wristband on the day; and

(3) acknowledges the high economic cost of violence against women and their children, estimated to be $13.6 billion in 2008-09 and, should no action be taken, the cost will be an estimated $14.6 billion in 2021-22.

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (18:30): Over the weekend many of us came together to celebrate annual White Ribbon Day. 25 November each year is set aside to remembering and committing to do something about violence perpetrated against women and girls in the community. White Ribbon Day is dedicated to raising awareness of tackling the issues of domestic violence against women, which is the most prevalent form of violence that we have in our community today. Domestic violence is the single most widespread human rights abuse throughout the world. Australia is no exception. Although this country is doing much to protect victims and address the attitudes underlying the continuation of violence against women, the statistics on domestic violence are simply terrifying. The fact is that in their lifetime one in three women in our country will experience physical violence and one in five will experience violence of a sexual nature. It is also a fact that one woman is killed each week by her current or former partner. If that is not a wake-up call to society, I am not sure what is.

These statistics should be quite chilling for every responsible citizen in our country, but they become even more confronting when you personalise them and acknowledge the fact that every woman that we know is vulnerable to violence. When I look to personalise this I think of my wife, Bernadette, my daughter, Elizabeth, and my three fabulous granddaughters, Charlie, Maisie and Kiarni. For me that is the one in five; the statistic sits there. So for me it becomes very personal. With the females in my life I love the most, that one in five statistic really resonates with me. I would like to encourage all men to personalise this statistic. If they did, it might strengthen our resolve when it comes to changing the attitude which allows domestic violence to flourish.

Domestic violence and violence against women in general is one of the most significant issues facing our community today. Left unchecked, domestic violence will continue to flourish on an intergenerational basis. What we know is that 60 per cent of young boys growing up in abusive households are more than likely to become abusers themselves. What is even more chilling and disturbing to me, and I just cannot fathom this, is that 50 per cent of young women or girls growing up in an abusive household are more than likely to take an abuser as a husband or a life partner. Then the cycle continues. When you consider that one in four young people have witnessed violence against their mother or stepmother in their lifetime, it clearly demonstrates how widespread this is as an issue in our community.

In fact, domestic violence is even more prevalent in south-west Sydney, in the area of my electorate, than in the rest of the country because of a couple of things. There is an issue about it being a low socioeconomic area, an area of great disadvantage, which probably comes into the equation. It is also a very multicultural community. Many people who migrate are fleeing
from violence and oppression themselves, and perhaps some of that is manifested in the way women and girls are treated.

Cultural barriers make it significantly harder to get the message through to victims about seeking help but also to get the message through to perpetrators and potential perpetrators that domestic violence in our community is a crime—that, if you commit this crime, you will be dealt with and more than likely you will go to jail. That is the message we really have to get through. We have to protect the victims and look after them, but also, to abusers and potential abusers, we really need to articulate our stand on domestic violence in our community.

Only last Friday I had the opportunity to speak at a couple of functions. Before I went there I decided to check the level of reported cases of domestic violence in my local areas. I discovered that from January through to now there have been 2,079 incidents of domestic violence reported in Liverpool. In Fairfield there have been 2,024 over the same period. In Cabramatta there have been 797. In Green Valley there have been 1,500. That does not cover a full year, but the stats are very high. When I sit down and talk to the local police they tell me that, of all the assaults that occurred in each of those four police commands, 50 per cent of them relate to domestic violence. In terms of police resources and doing something about domestic violence—looking after victims—we have to take into account that 50 per cent of all assaults in those area commands relate to domestic violence. They also advised me that there are still many incidents of domestic violence going unreported. That may be a cultural reflection. We have seen progressively an increasing number of women having the courage to report their abusive partners. That is a good thing.

Similarly, there is underreporting. Domestic violence not only causes a lifetime of pain for victims and their communities but also has a significant economic ramification. I have just described the amount of work by the local police. Almost up to $15 billion, they estimate, by the year 2021 would be the cost of domestic violence. At the moment it is about $13 billion, they estimate. Bear in mind that the cost of organised crime to our community is $15 billion, so it is not far behind it in terms of the overall cost. We literally cannot afford to turn a blind eye to domestic violence.

On Friday last week, I attended two functions in my electorate designed to draw attention to domestic violence. I attended the Liverpool and Green Valley White Ribbon event at Miller Square, where residents, the local police and local service providers came together to raise awareness of this important community issue. Attendees enjoyed a BBQ and live performances and were able to gather useful information from stalls held by various local service providers. The event organiser, who is a fellow White Ribbon ambassador and a good friend of mine, Jimmy Masher, of the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre, once again put together a wonderful event. The local area commander, Superintendent James Johnson, was also on hand and put a police perspective to the difficulties of domestic violence in our community.

The Cabramatta White Ribbon Day event at the Cabramatta PCYC was just as big an event. In fact, I think they had around 300 people attending, with many cultural performances, stalls and guest speakers, including Police Inspector Guy Newman. I would like to acknowledge all the hard work the Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre put into making that event very significant. I would also like to thank Julio Gruttulini, President of the Cabramatta Community Centre, and Dr Simon Emsley, Community Development and Advocacy

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FEDERATION CHAMBER
Coordinator at the Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, for all their hard work. Another group I would like to refer to is the Aboriginal women's group Sisters for Sisters, which is part of the Liverpool Women's Resource Centre. The group started in 2010 as a result of the Aboriginal Women Against Violence program, which was run in partnership between the LWRC and Joan Harrison Support Services for Women. The group is about Aboriginal women coming together and telling their stories through artwork. I recently attended their art exhibition. These are women who are trying to make a difference and support one another. In that respect, I thank Shirley Kent, the coordinator of the Liverpool Women's Resource Centre, and all the ladies from the Aboriginal art group, who allowed me to view their incredible contribution. I seek leave to tender to the House the document they gave to me, entitled 'Sisters for Sisters: a publication by the Aboriginal women's group on domestic violence'.

Lease granted.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland) (18:40): In supporting this motion, I would like to commend the member for Fowler. His contribution here tonight joins a lot of fine words that have been spoken in the last 72 hours as community leaders right throughout Australia have denounced violence against women and supported the principles of White Ribbon Day. I had the opportunity to speak last night at a community function in Briagolong, where we took the oath in front of another 100 or 200 men.

In making my contribution, I would like to reinforce the words of the member for Fowler and also those of the Victorian police chief, Ken Lay, who pointed out that violence against women is an issue which is often discussed in terms of statistics. It is easy to talk about these sorts of numbers—51,000 family incident reports, 17,000 arrests or 36,000 offences. On average, one woman is killed by her partner or a former partner every week in Australia. One in three women over the age of 15 report physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Then we had the incidents in Melbourne quite recently with the tragic deaths of Jill Meagher and Sarah Cafferkey. But the reality is that we do not put a human face to the tragedy when we just talk about statistics. It is important in this place, as we discuss White Ribbon Day, to recognise the human toll of violence against women. It is also important that we recognise that, for a lot of women in Australia, the streets of our cities and regional towns are safer than their own homes. For a lot of people in Australia, the tragic reality is that there is more danger for them in their own bedrooms than there is in a public bar room, and that is a disturbing fact that we need to think about as we talk about White Ribbon Day.

In my electorate, the Gippsland Women's Health Service takes the leading role in the fight against violence in Gippsland. I had the opportunity to meet with representatives from that service in recent weeks, and the really strong point to be made is that this is not a women's problem, it is not a problem for the police, it is not a problem for members of parliament like those gathered here today and it is not a problem just for the Gippsland Women's Health Service. This is a problem for our entire community and, in particular, it is a problem for the men in our community. It is up to us as men, particularly members of the House of Representatives who are leaders in our own communities, to set the example for other men and young boys within our community. Swearing the oath, as we did today in the parliament at the White Ribbon Day function, is the easy part. We must be vigilant for the other 364 days of the year. There are simple things that we can do to demonstrate our respect for women in our daily lives. In swearing to never commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against
women, we are taking a stand and setting a standard in the community. When we hear degrading jokes about women, we can choose not to pass them on. We can choose not to forward degrading emails. We can choose to treat all the women in our lives with the respect that they deserve, both in the workplace and in our family lives. The very simple question we can ask ourselves as men is: would we laugh at that joke or enjoy that pornographic video if it were our mother, our daughter, our sister, our wife or our girlfriend? These are the choices we can make every day of the year as men.

On that point in relation to pornography, I want to raise my concern about what I see as the increasingly violent nature of pornography and the extraordinary level of accessibility that now exists. It has the potential, I believe, to distort men's views of women in the community. I was going to demonstrate this on my iPad today, but I thought we might lose our G-rating on A-PAC. When talking about this issue on Friday in my office with two of my staff members, we googled three words on the iPad: nude, women and sex. These are words which I would say any 10-year-old boy could spell and certainly could search online—they are very competent with the technology. Within 10 seconds, Google had provided us with a long list of sites which met those search parameters. Within 30 seconds we could download visual images of sexual acts which were demeaning, violent and aggressive towards women. We were not asked at any stage to verify our age and we could access that 24 hours a day with a mobile device like an iPad, anywhere we liked. We have access to hardcore pornography wherever we are—at home, in the workplace, in the parliament of Australia or anywhere we choose to go online.

I know some people listening will say, 'That's freedom of choice—what's the problem with that?' But as a father with two sons and two daughters, and as a member of parliament, I am deeply concerned about the potential impact that such violent and aggressive images will have on young people. The objectification of women within the porn industry has direct links to violence against women in our community. Women are continually depicted in demeaning roles. The gender role they are given in the pornographic industry is to serve men. The images are often violent and graphic, and it can give young people and particularly young men a false sense of how a healthy sexual relationship should work.

I fear, and the evidence supports me, that there is a strong link between violence and pornography. The industry would deny it, but you would expect that from the industry because it is a $25 billion industry—we are talking about a big business. It is constantly developing even more hardcore images as consumers become bored with previous offerings. I quote an extract from the summary of the report from the United States Attorney-General's Commission on Pornography, which looked at the violent repercussions of porn:

Since the clinical and experimental evidence supports the conclusion that there is a causal relationship between exposure to sexually violent materials and an increase in aggressive behavior directed towards women, and since we believe that an increase in aggressive behavior towards women will in a population increase the incidence of sexual violence in that population, we have reached the conclusion unanimously and confidently, that the available evidence strongly supports the hypothesis that substantial exposure to sexually violent materials as described here bears a causal relationship to antisocial acts of sexual violence and, for some subgroups, possibly to unlawful acts of sexual violence.

I am a realist. I am not a wowser. What adults choose to do, within reason, is entirely up to them. In this modern era of accessibility and increased accessibility via the internet, I acknowledge that we cannot ban pornography and we will not be able to stop it or police it,
but I think we can discredit it. We can work harder as a community to discredit it. We can
give our young people the appropriate skills, the resilience to cope and an understanding of
how a positive sexual relationship works, and reveal to them the ugly side of the porn
industry. We can help them understand that the violent sex depicted in pornographic videos is
highly unlikely to be the type of physical contact or physical relationship their girlfriend or
wife in the future will enjoy.

I have been reading the work of Victorian researchers Maree Crabbe and David Corlett,
who have studied the porn industry very closely. They are developing prevention measures to
help young people understand the difference between pornography and reality. I encourage
other members to take the time to have a look at some of their work. They say that we need to
help young people to understand issues of gender, power and consent, and we need to do this
by having conversations with young people in our schools, at home and in society more
broadly.

It is not just the young people we need to educate. We need to give parents the skills to talk
more comfortably about this issue, because it is a difficult issue for parents to talk about with
their sons and daughters. I think young people are very smart, and they are pretty tech-savvy;
I think they are better than the porn industry and I think they are going to figure it out. If we
are serious about reducing the incidence of violence against women, we have to take on the
porn industry and give our community those skills and the capacity to counter this cancer in
our society. The violent and extreme scenes which have become mainstream pornography are
a cancer in our society. It is slowly eating away at our morality and it is certainly eroding the
social fabric of our community.

On White R
ibbon Day we talk a lot about justice and equality for women, but there can be
no justice and equality for women when we have a $25 billion industry that survives by
depicting violent, aggressive and dominant roles for men over submissive women. There can
be no justice or equality for women until we address that fundamental issue. Exercising
control and power over women is the absolute core of pornographic material in the 21st
century, and exercising control and power over women is a fundamental feature of violence
against women. The link is undeniable, and our challenge is to help our young people to
develop the skills to have healthy relationships in the future.

I am certainly not saying that if you watch porn then you are automatically going to
commit violent crime towards women, but when we have such young and impressionable
viewers exposed to such images on a constant basis the risk is obvious to us as a community.
In raising this issue today in the context of the debate put by the member for Fowler I am not
wishing to sound alarmist, but I think parents need to be aware of the risk. I challenge parents
listening tonight to take the 30-second test I took on Friday with my staff. Anywhere, at any
time, their children could be downloading hardcore pornography and violent images.

We all need to start working together to explode the porn industry myth. We need to be
telling our sons about healthy relationships and how to respect girls and women. We need to
let our daughters know what they should expect and what they deserve. Preventing violence
against women is something that all members of this place have expressed their passion about
here today. As men, I believe that we do have the capacity to make a difference. Violence
against women is never acceptable and in the 21st century it is up to us to redefine what
masculinity is about. Real men do not hurt women.
As I said earlier, it is fine for us to come in here today as members of parliament and swear the White Ribbon Day oath, but the real challenge is going to be what we do for the other 364 days of the year. I commend the motion and I commend all members for taking the opportunity to speak on behalf of the White Ribbon Day event. I wish them well in the future as we work as a community to eliminate violence against women, wherever it may be.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (18:50): I rise this evening to support the member for Fowler's motion and I commend him for bringing it to the attention of the House. Violence against women is one of the most insidious crimes that we as a society are confronted with, and the statistics reveal a disturbing situation. One woman is killed every week by a current or former partner, one in three women over the age of 15 report physical or sexual violence at some time in their lives, in 50 per cent of households where domestic violence occurs child abuse also occurs and one in four young people have witnessed violence against their mother or stepmother. These are the terrifying realities that confront women experiencing violence in my electorate and right across the country.

In fact, the very term 'domestic violence' is one that is often seen as inaccurate. For some years there has been a growing debate about whether we should be distinguishing between private and public forms of violence. It is more commonly, however, used to refer to violence generally against women. Domestic violence does not only constitute physical violence. It can take many forms, including forced isolation, verbal abuse, financial abuse and emotional abuse.

Statistics are one thing but the human face is, of course, another. I saw first hand during my time as a pro bono duty solicitor for female victims of domestic violence what this really means. In approximately 10 years of my former life as a lawyer, I was a volunteer duty solicitor for the Redfern Women's Domestic Violence Advocacy Service. I would front up to the Downing Centre at least one Wednesday a month, usually more, to assist representation in mentions and apprehended violence order hearings for female victims of domestic violence.

There are a few cases that really stick in my mind. I saw a lot in those years. The one that sticks out to me more than anything was of a young Lebanese woman who had met in Lebanon an Australian man whom she decided to marry. She married him in Lebanon, came to Australia pregnant and had the baby in Australia. It was decided for some unknown reason that her new husband's family no longer wanted her. She was subjected to just about every form of violence—not just physical but emotional, mental, and financial. She was literally thrown out of the house with her infant. She could not speak a word of English, and she was continually threatened by this man and his family. She ended up being accommodated in a refuge when I was representing her.

Here was a first-time mother with an infant, in a foreign country, having been subjected to every form of violence you can imagine. That is one that to this day sticks out in my mind. Every now and then I think of trying to find out what happened to this lady, but, as I have been counselled by other people, it was my job to represent her. I did, I managed to obtain an order against the perpetrator and his family. But that poor woman and what she went through will always stick with me. I also saw a disproportionate number of Aboriginal women and their children who were victims of domestic violence. Even though this was a couple of years ago and social media has certainly taken off a lot since my time practising, the amount of electronic stalking of young women was absolutely alarming. I want to mention the support
workers and the lawyers Gilbert + Tobin, who gave many years of support to advocacy services and continue to do so, because, without these non-government agencies stepping in, female victims of violence would have much less support than they currently do. I particularly mention the Outer West Domestic Violence Network, which held its White Ribbon breakfast at Blacktown two weeks ago. It was attended by hundreds of business and community leaders who all took the White Ribbon oath. I represent a large proportion of the Blacktown local government area, which, unfortunately, has some of the highest rates of domestic violence in Australia. The local area commander of Blacktown police, Superintendent Mark Wright, told us that domestic violence kills about 36 people each year in the Quaker's Hill, Mt Druitt and Blacktown local area command. It is a disturbing and shocking figure that no-one in the public should put up with.

One of the major issues of violence of this nature is the silence that often occurs in an abusive relationship. Two out of three victims do not go to the police. Whilst I would say it is important for us to raise this as a parliament, we should also remember that not only must we raise this but also we cannot tolerate silence when it comes to violence against women.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (18:56): Tonight I rise to speak to the member for Fowler's motion on White Ribbon Day. Violence Against Women, Australia Says No was for many years one of the most visible campaigns in Australia, reaching an audience of millions. But why did such a campaign have to run in a country such as ours? The very sad reality is that as many as one in three Australian women will in some way be affected by violence against them. This is an absolutely shocking statistic and one that we must all work hard to make sure is turned around.

A national survey that was conducted a couple of years ago found that 17 per cent of women had experienced a sexual assault, in many cases by someone they knew, someone who was very close to them. This breach of trust at the most fundamental level is both sickening and disturbing. I guess we all know that, whilst the visible signs of physical abuse may heal, the psychological and emotional pain that is suffered can be ongoing and can last for many years into the future. Some people may take that emotional pain through the rest of their life.

As the member for Fowler has already indicated, the estimated cost of violence against women as well as children in Australia in 2008-09 was $13.6 billion, which is an extraordinary amount. It is a huge cost to Australia and to Australians. We cannot allow this to continue. Certainly, one of the better ways to battle against violence against women is through raising awareness. The Violence Against Women, Australia Says No campaign is a good example of awareness at its best, as it stuck in the minds of many people because of its very simple message.

One organisation that is actively working hard to raise awareness is White Ribbon, the drivers behind White Ribbon Day. Starting in Canada over 20 years ago, White Ribbon Day has spread across the globe and spreads a very simple message that violence against women is simply unacceptable. In 1999, the United Nations declared the date on which White Ribbon is held, 25 November, to be the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children.

Yesterday, on 25 November, I joined members of the Southern Gold Coast community at Palm Beach to raise awareness for White Ribbon Day. A variety of events and activities were organised by the Palm Beach Neighbourhood Centre, including a bike ride and AFL footy
tunnel with members of the Gold Coast Suns team present. I take the opportunity to acknowledge the work of Jill Wynd from the Palm Beach Neighbourhood Centre in making the day the success that it was.

On Sunday, we had the Gold Coast Mayor, Tom Tate; the state Assistant Minister for Child Safety, Rob Molhoek; and the member for Burleigh, Michael Hart, all there attending and voicing their opposition to violence against women. It is very important that we have our community leaders making a very strong stand and showing good leadership on such a significant and important issue. We also had at the event on Sunday the police superintendent Paul Ziebarth, who spoke about the appalling domestic violence statistics in our community.

One of the things that White Ribbon advocates is men taking an oath never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. The most important part of this oath is the promise not to remain silent. Part of helping end violence against women is not only undertaking not be violent yourself but also having the courage to speak up when you know that someone is using violence against a woman. Together we can help bring an end to violence against women. Through awareness, we can stop violence being perpetrated against today's women and the women of tomorrow. I give my commitment to work with the community to do what we can to ensure that violence against women does not continue.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (19:01): I rise to speak in support of the honourable member's motion. In speaking in support, it is important to put on the record what the motion actually is about. It is about 25 November—which was yesterday—which is White Ribbon Day. It is a day aimed at preventing violence against women in Australia. It is about encouraging Australian men to join the My Oath campaign to challenge the attitudes and behaviours that allow violence to continue.

White Ribbon Day was established in Australia in 2003. It was a unique campaign by men and for men, with women's support, to prevent and reduce violence against women and girls. In 2007 the White Ribbon Foundation was established in recognition that achieving attitude change on violence required a long-term and high-profile commitment to work within communities to engage men and boys. The White Ribbon Foundation has a variety of ways of doing this. It works through a combination of awareness-raising campaigns, community events, and initiatives with schools, universities, workplaces and sporting organisations. It is most widely known for initiatives around White Ribbon Day and the 'I swear' campaign, which has been expanded to the 'I've got your back' initiative and the White Ribbon ambassadors, who are frequently high-profile men in our community.

Every year there are around 350 events held across the country, mostly on or around White Ribbon Day. People register these events on the White Ribbon website. Of these, 50 are coordinated by the White Ribbon Foundation. They mainly also include fundraising. To date, over 220 events have been registered on the White Ribbon website, and there will be many more going on in communities all around the country.

I am pleased to say that there was Australian government funding for the White Ribbon Foundation—$1 million over four years to 30 June 2014—enabling them to do some of this work. It is important work because it is profile raising, it is about being in the public eye and mind. Whenever we talk about domestic violence everybody in this House says how dreadful and terrible it is and how it should not happen, but it continues to happen. I worked in a women's refuge and I set up the Far North Coast Domestic Violence Liaison Committee. I
have also been involved in a whole range of things in my community, along with other good people. We continue to tackle it and attempt to reduce it. We want it to end. But it continues to happen. It is a long-term goal to change attitudes in our society so that it is just not acceptable anywhere. To those of us who find it abhorrent and unacceptable and wonder why it continues, there are still many people with the attitude that it is okay, it is all right, or who do not even think about it—they just think it is part of our society. The Prime Minister and the Minister for the Status of Women yesterday in speaking on this issue said that, to achieve a sustained reduction to violence against women and girls, every sector of the Australian community must act—and we must. Sometimes it can be challenging to know when and how to act. If we know about it and we know someone who is perpetrating it or someone who is a victim of it, we must find ways of making it not acceptable and giving support to the person who is suffering it. Women often leave and they are forced back because they need somewhere to live. I think that it has to be the No. 1 priority right across all the services that, if a woman leaves and she leaves with her children and she needs accommodation, that accommodation just must be given. It has to be given and it has to be immediate. With those words, I commend the motion.

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (19:06): Violence against women is a very serious issue, and the horrifying statistics speak for themselves. One Australian woman is killed every week by a current or former partner; one in three women over the age 15 report physical or sexual violence at some time in their lives; one in four young people have witnessed violence against their mother or stepmother; and domestic and family violence is the major cause of homelessness for Australian women and their children.

As a former police officer for 25 years, I have seen many examples of violence against women firsthand. As a husband and a father of two beautiful daughters, I found it very difficult to understand how these violent acts could occur, especially when they were instigated by those closest to the victims themselves. Throughout my time in the New South Wales Police Force I was faced with many acts of violence against women, including domestic violence, family violence, wife bashing, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, emotional abuse and forced isolation from friends and family. It was heartbreaking to see these actions occurring against women of all ages and cultures—and it is even more disturbing to see so many people sit on the sidelines refusing to stand up for what is right while those they love come to harm. This is why White Ribbon Day is so important. It encourages violence against women to stop and asks those who witness such violence to take a stand for these women and make it clear that it will no longer be tolerated in our communities.

In my electorate there are still too many examples of domestic violence against women, both emotionally and physically, but there are also some great initiatives as part of the White Ribbon program taking place to stop this behaviour and encourage others to stand up against it. Each year the Campbelltown Domestic Violence Liaison Committee, which includes the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Campbelltown City Council and UnitingCare Burnside, conducts an event to help raise awareness in the local community for White Ribbon Day. Last year they painted a 30-metre white ribbon on the grass hill at the University of Western Sydney, which could be seen from Narellan Road. They also sent out posters to local businesses so that they could display and sell white ribbons at Macarthur Square and Glenquarie Shopping Centre.
The Campbelltown police, together with members of the Campbelltown Domestic Violence Liaison Committee, held a free barbecue in Mawson park last Friday. The barbecue included information stalls, kids activities and a visit from the New South Wales Police safety mascot, Constable Charlie. Businesses and organisations from the Macarthur community also supported the event, including Tim's Garden Centre Park, the Paul Wakeling Motor Group, Campbelltown City Council, W.I.L.M.A. Women's Health Centre, Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation, the Benevolent Society, Campbelltown Fire Brigade, UnitingCare Burnside, the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Campbelltown Lions Club, who manned the barbecue on the day. It was great to see so many people from my community attend to support the barbecue on Friday. Just by doing so, they have taken a stand against violence against women—and for that they should all be very proud of themselves.

The people who took part in these events in Macarthur are helping to strengthen the White Ribbon campaign, which began in Australia in 2003. It was initially part of UN Women and formally became a foundation in 2007. It is now Australia's only national male-led campaign to prevent violence against women. White Ribbon believes in the goodness of most men and it believes that good men reject violence against women and are willing to act to prevent it. White Ribbon believes in the capacity of the individual to change and encourage change in others. I think it is a fantastic program, which is why I signed up to be a White Ribbon Ambassador last year. I believe in everything the campaign stands for, especially its primary focus on prevention.

The White Ribbon Foundation works to change our culture to stop violence before it occurs with activities in schools, workplaces and the broader community. As an ambassador, I have made a commitment to take an active role in any violence against women. I join many men from all walks of life who are passionate advocates for social change. White Ribbon now has 1,900 active ambassadors promoting the campaign in the Australian community. These men share the White Ribbon message within their networks and, through social media, highlight the importance of respect for women and encourage community groups, local councils, workplaces, men's organisations, sports and services clubs to get involved in the White Ribbon campaign.

Today I would like to congratulate all of the people in my community who have signed up to be a White Ribbon Ambassador and those who support the cause throughout the year. Most importantly, I would like to thank every man who has ever intervened or stood up against violence towards women. It is these men who are leading by example and breaking the silence from the front line. They are the greatest ambassadors for the cause, and it is thanks to them that we are moving closer to a society where such behaviour is not tolerated and that is the way it should be.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond—Parliamentary Secretary for Trade) (19:10): I rise in support of the motion by the member for Fowler and acknowledge his long-term commitment to the principles of White Ribbon Day. I know he has been a very strong advocate of raising awareness about this issue for many years. I also acknowledge and commend all the other speakers on this very important motion.

We know that White Ribbon Day is so important to the whole community in terms of raising everyone's awareness about the devastating impact of domestic violence, and I speak to it tonight, particularly from the perspective of a former police officer. I saw all too often...
the reality of domestic violence as a general duties police officer. I saw the devastating impact upon women, their children and their families and indeed our community as a whole. So I have a very strong commitment to making sure we work together to take action in relation to this.

The purpose of White Ribbon Day is primarily to highlight the devastating impact of domestic violence and how we can work together to prevent it, to stop it. We know that White Ribbon Day is observed nationally on 25 November each year in conjunction with the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and aims to raise awareness for the prevention of violence against women.

This day to raise this awareness was brought about by a terrible tragedy. In 1989, 14 women were shot dead at the Montreal school of engineering by a young man. This very brutal act triggered the creation of the White Ribbon campaign. It is the largest effort by men across the world working in partnership with women to end violence against women.

White Ribbon Day stands as a stark reminder to us that violence against women in any form or context is absolutely unacceptable, and I encourage everyone to get involved with the campaign by joining the My Oath Campaign and taking the oath:

I swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women

It is important that we recognise that the White Ribbon Day initiative has become a catalyst for many women to seek help, so it is important that we talk about it here in our communities constantly to raise awareness and hope that it assists women in accessing help and support.

I also want to mention an important organisation in my electorate, the Tweed Shire Women's Service, that provides vital support services for women. They provide advocacy, information and support to many women who have been in situations or are in situations experiencing domestic violence, escaping domestic violence as well as supplying support to their families. This service was first established in 1987, and they have also provided lots of early intervention and crisis accommodation for women.

I am proud to be the patron of this outstanding organisation, which has for over 24 years made a huge difference to the lives of many women and children and also a huge difference to the community by the remarkable work that they do and continue to do. It is through the work of organisations like the Tweed Shire Women's Service, other support services, police and emergency services combined with the continued awareness of White Ribbon Day that together we can make a difference: we can stop this happening.

I would also like to recognise the fact that this government has a very strong and proud commitment to providing support for women and families that are affected by domestic violence. I was particularly pleased today with the Prime Minister's announcement that the government would be providing funding for the international conference into domestic violence programs, which will be held next year. The Prime Minister announced that the Gillard government will provide $20,000 in funding from the Women's Safety Agenda to support this important Australian-first conference, which will help increase awareness of the best ways to combat violence against women. It was great to have that announcement today.

The Gillard government is committed to crime and prevention activities aimed at reducing violence against women and their children. The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 brings together the efforts of governments across the
nation. This government has committed $86 million to initiatives under the national plan to improve the lives of women who have experienced violence. So it is really important to have that major commitment and, indeed, the commitment right across the country from all levels of government so that everyone is working together. I think we would all agree that every year we are seeing awareness raised more and more and we are seeing many more campaigns. It is really good to see that throughout the community people are speaking out. They are taking the oath.

As a former police officer I saw day to day—constantly—the impacts of domestic violence and now I see that these positive improvements are a major step. We certainly have a long way to go and, through increasing awareness raised by White Ribbon Day, we are achieving a lot. We should recognise that and I commend everyone who has spoken tonight and those who are intending to speak in terms of working together to make sure that we are improving the situation for women and their children right across the country, and those who are affected by domestic violence.

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (19:15): I am very grateful to the member for Fowler for bringing this motion today. I feel enormously proud that so many men in this parliament have taken a lead in speaking on this issue. I think it is really fantastic. I listened with great interest to the passionate speech given by my colleague the member for Macarthur.

I had the privilege of being the minister for women under the Howard government and working with the then Prime Minister to highlight the need for the violence against women to stop in this country. And the Prime Minister took a leading role and garnered the support of every state minister in the country. We met here in Canberra and together the Prime Minister and the state leaders sent out a very strong message that violence against women simply has to stop. They recognised that it is not just a problem for women but is also a problem for men, and that if we were going to succeed in stopping violence against women we would have to get men to take a leading role in talking to other men about it.

And one of the major thrusts of that campaign—I had the responsibility to roll out a national campaign—was to break the cycle of violence. Children are too often the innocent victims of domestic violence in particular. On 2 December 1989, 12 women were killed at Ecole Polytechnique de Montreal, Canada. And this shocking event brought the subject of violence against women to the forefront of the public consciousness. Two years afterwards a handful of men decided to mark the anniversary of this tragedy by starting White Ribbon Day. That is why we are wearing the white ribbons today. I am glad to see mine is still on because I think it has lost the pin.

This has become a worldwide movement and it is marvellous to see our men taking such a key role here in Australia. A unique part of White Ribbon Day is that it is led by men to stamp out violence against women. Men swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. Its initiative asked men to challenge stereotypes and speak out, reinforcing that it is simply not good enough for society to condone violence through silence.

It is an unfortunate reality that in Australia one woman is killed every week by a current or former partner, and one in three women over the age of 15 will report violence against them at some point in their lives. These confronting statistics are compounded by the fact that society has been apprehensive in dealing with domestic violence. This is all too common a complaint and was exemplified in a short clip shown on Channel 10's The Project last night. For the
benefit of the chamber, I can tell you that it focused on the experience of a women who, after a turbulent relationship, wished to leave her partner. After confronting her partner she was drugged and raped. She complained to the authorities, but the response received was tepid at best, with the woman being steered away from pursuing an official complaint because of the timidity at the time in confronting domestic violence. Five years after the incident she finally brought proceedings against her former partner, who was recently jailed for seven years. These incidents reinforce that society must not remain silent in the face of violence. We must change the social conditions that lead to violence and teach our children from a young age that respect is not dependent on a person's gender.

The myths surrounding violence and women must also be demystified. It is simply untrue that certain socioeconomic groups experience more domestic violence than others. Unfortunately, it is a problem that cuts across all society, regardless of background. Violence is also not necessarily related to drunkenness or substance abuse. Studies have shown that there are even numbers of incidents perpetrated by drunken and sober men. Also, violence is not experienced by a small number of women. A report by VicHealth in 2004, entitled Health costs of violence: measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence, found that violence is the biggest cause of injury or death for women between 18 and 45.

In the face of these alarming findings, it is critical that the campaign to stop violence against women remains strong. We can do that by urging everyone to visit the White Ribbon Day website and challenge what you think you know about violence against women and to learn more about the positive role models that are making a difference in local communities right across Australia.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (19:20): I rise in support of my colleague Chris Hayes and other parliamentary colleagues to support the motion acknowledging White Ribbon Day, November 25, a day aimed at preventing violence against women through a nationwide campaign to raise public awareness of the issue.

Violence against women is indeed an incredibly serious problem. I understand that one Australia woman is killed every week by a current or former partner, that one in three women over the age of 15 report physical or sexual violence at some time in their lives, that one in four young people have witnessed violence against their mother or stepmother, that two-thirds of women who experience domestic or family violence are in paid work, and that domestic and family violence is the major cause of homelessness for Australian women and their children.

I am one of the male parliamentarians for the elimination of violence against women who has taken the white ribbon pledge not to commit, not to condone, not to stay silent about violence against women. One of the things we have committed to do is raise awareness of the issue of violence and, in fulfilling this pledge, I would like to speak to the House briefly about the Brunswick community safety forum which I held jointly with the state member for Brunswick, Jane Garrett, on Monday, 19 November, very recently, in response to the death of Jill Meagher.

This forum was attended by 150 Brunswick residents. The Victoria Police Local Area Commander for the Moreland area, Dean McGowan, reported at the forum that crimes against the person are up around eight per cent, that most assaults are perpetrated by someone who is
known to the victim and that some 44 per cent are family violence cases. The Moreland district has allocated a new sergeant and two officers dedicated to the family violence issue.

The Executive Officer of Women's Information, Support and Housing in the North, Trish O'Donoghue, urged women to report all incidents, attempted assaults and the like, and pointed out that this will assist police to apprehend offenders before they commit more serious crimes.

Members of the audience asked questions about what action the police were taking to improve security. They talked about the need for more taxi ranks and more CCTV. Police responded that there will be five Protected Services officers at Coburg railway station, which is a crime hotspot. Later on, they are looking at doing more at the Jewell railway station and other areas in the southern part of my electorate. They also said that speaking up is necessary for police to be able to take action, and they observed again that you are more likely to be assaulted inside your home than outside it.

Residents talked about a range of community safety issues. They talked about the extent of population increase in Brunswick and they expressed a view that developers who make a lot of money, with hundreds of apartments going up, should make a contribution to the measures needed to improve safety and that it should not all be the responsibility of council or state governments. They talked about the need for more spending on lighting along pedestrian paths and railway stations. They said that Brunswick Police Station should be made more prominent and basically should be lit up like a Christmas tree. One resident talked about the 292 liquor licenses in Moreland. He believed they should financially contribute to making the community safer, with measures such as late night buses or extra lighting. Residents also talked about the fact that mixed-use planning can encourage slums and crime. In the light of further recent attacks on women in Melbourne, such as the murder of Sarah Cafferkey, I say again that violence against women is never acceptable under any circumstances, and we affirm that women like Jill Meagher and Sarah Cafferkey mattered and that they and their lives were important and meaningful to us.

We had at the forum Michelle Noon from the White Ribbon campaign who gave a very strong presentation. As the House is aware, every year White Ribbon runs an awareness campaign about the issue of violence against women and the role that men can play in preventing this violence. White Ribbon is encouraging men to stand up to violence against women with the knowledge that, and I use their words, 'Thousands of good men have got their back.' White Ribbon's new campaign highlights that men can challenge their mates and others in a way that does not endanger their own safety, knowing that there are many good men who support their actions and that the change starts with good men standing up and letting the perpetrators know that violent attitudes and behaviour towards women are never acceptable.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Wills. I think it is worth commenting that your electorate's response to the tragic death of Jill Meagher was something that all Australians would find very commendable and a strong community response.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (19:26): This year, the White Ribbon Day campaign is its 11th year, and the campaign is as pertinent as it was when it began. Research, as we know, reveals that as many as one in three women experience physical violence in their lifetime and one in five experience sexual violence in their lifetime. These numbers are far too high. The White Ribbon Day campaign is about reducing the number of women in Australia who experience violence perpetrated against them. The White Ribbon Day campaign is about changing the
culture in our society so that violence against women is completely unacceptable. White Ribbon Day encourages men to take a stance in their lives and in their relationships with other men to let them know that violent and predatory behaviour against women will not be tolerated.

What makes White Ribbon Day unique is that it does not seek to preach to men using a top-down approach, because we know that the top-down approach to education and public awareness campaigns that aim to change or influence behaviour does not have a great deal of success in achieving goals. In contrast, the White Ribbon Day is about change on the ground through peer-on-peer influence. The White Ribbon Day seeks to inspire men to stand up publicly in their networks and make it clear that they will never commit, excuse or remain silent about violence. Having personally witnessed the devastation that violence against women can have on families and communities, I believe that the White Ribbon Day is a campaign with a lot of merit. This is a campaign that every man in Australia needs to offer their full support to. As a nation, we need better awareness about the devastation that violence against women has on our society. It is for this reason that I again took the oath of the White Ribbon Day campaign. As I have said in this place before, violence against women has far-reaching effects. Violence impacts on women for the rest of their lives and even beyond. Violent behaviour is easily modelled by victims and witnesses, resulting in a dire intergenerational outcome. Unfortunately, there are all too many instances of generational learning of violent behaviour against women. We need to take a stand now to ensure the safety of the next generation of Australian women.

One community group in my electorate has taken-up the fight to stop violence against women. The Midland Information, Debt and Legal Advocacy Service Incorporated, known as MIDLAS, has this year run its own campaign for White Ribbon Day. MIDLAS created a series of short videos featuring community leaders of all ages, political persuasions and professions swearing the oath to end violence against women. I was pleased to be able to lend my own voice to this important initiative. It is fantastic to see so many people from my community get behind this great local campaign. It is through the efforts of MIDLAS and other community organisations that we will begin to see genuine change in our culture and an end to violence against women.

Violence against women can also result in dislocation of women and children in times of hardship; isolating women from their support networks and making it difficult to end the cycle of abuse. The emotional cost alone is enough reason for us to take action now to stop the cycle of violence. But on top of the emotional toll is an economic cost. It is estimated that violence against women in 2008-09 cost our country $13.6 billion, and if we do not take action against violence against women it is estimated that in 10 years we will face a cost of $14.6 billion. The financial and social cost of violence is far too high. I encourage all men—including my parliamentary colleagues and men in my local community—to seriously consider swearing the White Ribbon Day oath to take a stance against violence against women. We are role models in our communities and it is important that we lead by example. Violence against women is a serious and important matter—one that we need to shine a light on and bring out of the shadows and into the open. Violence against women will never be acceptable in any circumstance. Australian men cannot afford for this important issue to go unchallenged. No woman should ever be in fear of violence in the workplace, in her home or
in a social context. Australian men need to do everything in our power to make sure the women around us are safe. If we do not make the effort, the intergenerational changes will not occur in the way that we require. In my work as an undertaker and as a teacher I have seen the end result of violence against women and the impact that it has.

Debate adjourned.

**National Critical Care and Trauma Centre**

Debate resumed on the motion by Mrs Griggs:

That this House notes:

1. that 12 October 2012 marks the tenth anniversary of the horrific Bali bombings, which killed 202 people, including 88 Australians, and injured a further 240 people, the majority suffering burn injuries;
2. the significant contribution made by the Darwin and Perth hospitals in assisting Bali’s Sanglah Hospital deal with the scale of the disaster, as many of the injured required specialist burn treatment which was not available in Bali;
3. the establishment of the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre funded by the Australian Government which ensures Australia's capability to respond to disasters and major medical incidents in our region;
4. the benefits to the Northern Territory community through the great work that the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre performs, including the ability to provide specialist trauma and disaster training to all Australian clinicians, particularly those who provide services to the Northern Territory;
5. the ability of the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre to rapidly deploy highly skilled personnel to respond to incidents in the region, notably the involvement and provision of specialist expertise in the following international incidents, the:
   a. second Bali bombing;
   b. East Timor unrest;
   c. East Timor presidential assassination attempt;
   d. Ashmore Reef SIEV 36 incident; and
   e. Pakistan floods; and
6. the bipartisan acknowledgment of the outstanding clinical and academic leadership the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre has in disaster and trauma care, and the importance for ongoing support and funding of this essential facility.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (19:31): I rise today to bring to the attention of the House, through my motion, the need to recognise the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre, based in my electorate, as an outstanding facility born out of the horrific 2002 Bali bombings. The National Critical Care and Trauma Centre was an initiative of the then health minister and now Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Tony Abbott, who to this day remains a champion of this essential service. The 12th of October 2002 was a day that will forever haunt Australians and Indonesians. It was one of the darkest days in our joint history. For Territorians the attack on Bali was not only an attack on one of our closest neighbours; it was an attack on a place that we love and visit so often. I am told that some 20,000 Australians can be in Bali at any one time. Ten years ago 202 people were killed in the Bali bombings, with 88 Australians and 38 Indonesians among the victims. Another 240 were injured, many of them suffering major burns.
Many of the injured were transferred to the Royal Darwin Hospital, and it is largely thanks to the efforts of the incredible staff at the hospital that many of these people are still alive today. Within 62 hours of the bombings Royal Darwin Hospital medical staff had resuscitated 61 patients and evacuated 48 patients to burns units across Australia. In total, over 100 patients were treated, 70 of them critical. Former Prime Minister John Howard said recently of staff at the Royal Darwin Hospital:

The response … organised through the RDH, was a triumph of what I think I can be described as the gentle efficiency of Australians when faced with a great crisis.

It is important to acknowledge the Royal Perth Hospital as well. They treated 28 burns victims after the bombings. It is widely accepted that, while both the Royal Darwin Hospital and the Royal Perth Hospital carried out outstanding work, neither hospital was resourced well enough to handle the scale of this terrible tragedy. As I said, Tony Abbott oversaw the foundation of the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre. He said at the time that the centre would provide not only the Northern Territory but Australia with a first-class national health emergency response point to deal with disasters and major incidents in our region. The official website of the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre says the centre contributes to the Northern Territory economy by injecting $9.2 million per year to fund 58 medical, nursing and allied health positions, and it offers more than 1,300 training places. The establishment of the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre has enabled our ability to respond to incidents in the region, as was the case with the second Bali bombings in 2005; the 2008 assassination attempt on East Timorese President Jose Ramos-Horta; the 2009 Ashmore Reef SIEV36 incident; and the Pakistan floods in 2010.

Much of the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre's success is due to the executive director, Dr Len Notaras AM. Dr Notaras coordinated the hospital's response to the Bali bombings in 2002 and was awarded membership to the Order of Australia in 2003 in recognition of his outstanding work. It is important to also acknowledge Dr Didier Palmer, Director of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Royal Darwin Hospital, and Dr Gary Lum. All three men were instrumental in the foundation of the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre. I understand that to this day they continue to be strong advocates and champions for ongoing support and funding of this essential service.

I call on the government to ensure that there is wide acceptance of the outstanding clinical and academic leadership of the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre and call on the government to guarantee ongoing support and funding of this essential facility within my electorate. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (19:36): Firstly, for a number of reasons, I would like to commend the member for Solomon for putting this motion before the House. It recognises the really valuable work of the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre. It is located in a hospital in Darwin, in the Northern Territory. It is quite remarkable and a real tribute to Dr Len Notaras and the other doctors there. I agree with everything in the motion. I hope you will indulge me. I want to talk about one particular part of the motion, (5)(c), regarding the East Timor presidential assassination attempt, and how well Dr Ramos-Horta was treated at the clinic. I have not really talked about this in a public forum.

In my first week as a member of parliament—I was elected in 2007-08—on 11 February, I walked down the hall to my room, RG18. I was quite a newbie here. It was just after 8 am...
when my phone rang. It was a terrible phone call. It was Major Mick Stone. He said, 'Janelle, Jose has been shot.' My knees buckled and I said, 'Where is he? How much blood has he lost? Get him to Aspen clinic immediately.' Aspen clinic treated our soldiers in Timor Leste. Then Luke Gosling rang me. We had the same conversation and I said, 'Quick, get him there.' Then I rang Arsenio Ramos-Horta, Jose's brother, who lived in the compound with Jose, in the green house, which had also been my house. I lived in that compound for four years and worked for Dr Ramos-Horta for years, but I am also a close family friend. Even now, it is hard for me to talk about how I felt on that day. I was just willing him to stay alive, but I knew he needed the best possible care. I snapped to, took over and told people on the telephone what to do, to make sure, even though they were doing that.

Jose Ramos-Horta came back from his morning walk along the beach when he got shot. He would walk along the beach and I would walk up the hill behind the house, so I knew exactly everything that would have happened. Needless to say, I spent the first week in parliament on the phone. I had little sleep, but there was lots of help, support and advice. I rang my girlfriend Kirsty Sword Gusmão, the wife of the Prime Minister. She had been involved in an incident with the Prime Minister. I talked with her and dealt with that issue as well in a number of ways. I was called upon to assist and liaise, and I did, in lot of ways I'll never speak about here—or anywhere. But Jose stayed conscious in the ambulance on the journey to Aspen clinic. It is quite a few kays from his place in Meti-hau Areia Branca to Aspen clinic—a bumpy road and even a bumbery ambulance, and of course he has told me about that whole trip and we have talked about it in great detail. I kept saying, 'Get him there quickly, and get him transfused; get him blood'—and some of that blood was coming out of people and going straight into him. I got an opportunity to thank the doctors and medical staff at Aspen clinic for saving his life there, where they stabilised him. It is a life very precious to me, of a dear friend.

But I am leading up to the value of Darwin's National Critical Care and Trauma Centre. It was a matter of debate—and I kept getting calls, and people were talking about where Jose would go once he had been stabilised, because they were going to move him to Australia for more intensive specialist care—about whether he would go to Brisbane, or to Sydney or somewhere else. I was thinking, 'That's a long way to travel; that's a lot of hours flying, when he is critically injured.' I said 'No, he goes to Darwin; he goes to the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre', because I knew that Dr Len Notaris and everyone would be able to do everything that was needed for him, it was a shorter trip and I thought, 'Why would you send him further, when we have that facility there', and I insisted that that was the place he needed to go to. I kept doing that, and that was where he went. I visited him at the end of that week. He was unconscious, but I sat and talked with him and I talked with the doctors, and I knew that he was getting the best possible care. They certainly did a good deal to save his life after he had been stabilised by the guys at Aspen—so, thank you for the motion. (Time expired)

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (19:41): I am delighted to speak on this motion this evening, and in fact second the motion. The world changed dramatically on 11 September 2001 when civilian passenger jets were hijacked over the United States and three were flown into buildings in New York and Washington, with a fourth plane crashing in a field. This event marked a new era of terrorism against Western countries...
and our citizens. One of the frightening aspects was that small numbers of terrorists showed that they could inflict loss of life on a scale much larger than previously thought.

While no such attack has taken place on Australian soil, Australians were among the targets of a horrific attack in the holiday resort island of Bali in 2002—222 were killed, including 88 Australians, with a further 240 people injured. Medical facilities were overwhelmed at the time by the numbers and the nature of the injuries, including victims of some horrific burns. Three years later Bali was once again targeted by extremists, with bombs killing 26 people, including four Australians with more than 100 people injured. Australians were shocked by the images of destruction on the beautiful island paradise that hundreds of thousands of people had visited over many years.

The then coalition government responded to these tragic events with a range of immediate and longer-term support measures. One of the most important has been the establishment of the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, which was established to respond to international and national disasters and emergencies. This centre has been designed to cope with any large influx of people into Royal Darwin Hospital in the wake of such events.

The potential for large-scale disasters in the region to Australia's north was revealed by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami that resulted in the deaths of up to 280,000 people and injuries to hundreds of thousands more. With Indonesia and Papua New Guinea on a highly active earthquake fault line, there is obvious potential for natural disasters in our immediate region. And, sadly, the man-made threat of terrorism has not fully receded, with threats recently made to attack gatherings of international leaders in Bali. These threats proved groundless, but the fact that there are extremists motivated to make such threats is greatly concerning, particularly given the attacks that have taken place in Bali in the past.

There are broader benefits to the Darwin community from having this centre, with a large investment in new medical equipment over recent years—$2.6 million was spent on new medical equipment between 2005 and 2009 alone. Another positive aspect of the centre is the focus on training and promoting high-quality health care. Remote parts of Australia and regional parts of Australia have often struggled to achieve higher standards of health care taken for granted in other parts of the country. If this centre is able to lift standards in the Top End then that is an additional benefit that must be welcomed. As we know, the Top End is also prone to regular visits by cyclones that bring destructive winds and floods. This centre has already proven its worth in that regard.

To return to the original reason for establishing the centre—that is, the terrible acts of terrorism—it is vital that we do not give in to the actions of terrorists who seek to undermine our way of life and to attack the freedoms we hold so dear. The enhanced ability to respond to disasters brings a new level of comfort to other Australians travelling to and around our region. I recall visiting Bali in the wake of the attacks, and I spoke to many Balinese people who were devastated by what had occurred. With tears in their eyes they asked that Australians not abandon them. And we have returned to their shores in defiance of terror and in defiance of the extremist views held by a small but dangerous minority.

This is an important motion to recognise the work of the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre. I pay tribute to the member for Solomon for bringing this motion to the House and for her eloquent speech this evening. It reveals that she has a deep understanding of the issues of concern to her electorate but also the wider implications, not only for
Australia but for countries in our region, that a trauma response centre and national critical care centre of this magnitude should be established by the then coalition government in Darwin. I thank the member for Solomon for having the foresight to bring this matter before the House to show her deep concern for people in our region as well as in her own community. *(Time expired)*

**Mr Hayes** (Fowler) (19:47): I too congratulate the member for Solomon for bringing this motion, and appropriately so, to the attention of our parliament. The island of Bali has for many decades been one of Australia's favourite holiday destinations, drawn by surf, beach culture, entertainment facilities, and peace and tranquillity. Australians have traditionally been driven by tourism with respect to our relationship with Bali. The image of Bali as a peaceful, welcoming destination was sadly shattered on 12 October 10 years ago, when a terrorist bomb took the lives of 202 people, including 88 Australians. The number of casualties might have been even higher had it not been for the quick response and assistance from the Indonesian and Australian medical professionals, police and local residents of Bali. In addition to the lives of those lost, 209 people suffered significant injuries, primarily with severe burns. The injured were treated either at Sanglah Hospital, the nearest hospital in eastern Indonesia, or Royal Darwin Hospital. The efforts of the various health professionals, both in Darwin and in Sanglah Hospital, were incredible and deserve to be acknowledged with our highest praise.

I had the opportunity to visit Sanglah Hospital only last year, during my study leave, together with the chair of Royal Darwin Hospital, a very good friend of mine, Colin McDonald QC. I met with the medical professionals, including the hospital's president, Dr Wayan Sutarga, and was briefed on the strength of the relationship between the Royal Darwin Hospital and the Sanglah Hospital. I was taken around the burns unit, which was established as a result of AusAID funding, and the emergency department, where many of the bomb victims were first treated in Indonesia.

The trauma of the terrorist bombing and the strategic need for Australia to be able to respond and protect our citizens led the former Prime Minister, the Hon. John Howard, and his government at the time to commence the creation of the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre based in Royal Darwin Hospital. This centre currently benefits the Northern Territory community and ensures that we as a nation are prepared to respond promptly and efficiently to any trauma event on our soil or in our immediate region. Developing the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre is certainly the right move to be taken by the government.

The government must be able to respond promptly in respect of care for all victims, particularly victims of terrorism. Although individuals are often the immediate victims of terrorism, we should not lose sight of the fact that it is the state that is the actual target of terrorism. The Bali bombing was an attack on Australians and on what our nation stands for. It is therefore the nation's responsibility to provide care for victims, as we have been doing in the aftermath of terrorism activities, including the Bali bombings in both 2002 and 2005. The strengthening of the relationship between Sanglah Hospital and Royal Darwin Hospital and the location of the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre in the Northern Territory are very important to Australia's relationships within our region.
One of the outcomes of the 2020 conference was the identification of eastern Indonesia as being the area of greatest strategic importance to this country. It is our nearest and biggest neighbour to the north. The region is unfortunately prone to man-made as well as natural disasters. We need to have highly skilled personnel ready and able to rapidly respond for deployment to a region where they can deal with matters, particularly trauma events, without delay. It is very important that the government continues to support and fund the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre. Unfortunately, we live in times where natural disasters as well as man-made disasters can strike at any time and we as a nation must stand prepared. I do genuinely thank the member for Solomon for bringing this matter to our attention. I know she is very passionate about it and she should be commended.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (19:52): I also rise to support the motion brought to the chamber by the member for Solomon whose passion and commitment to the people of the Northern Territory is a driving factor behind her continued support for improved health outcomes and health facilities, particularly the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, because it enables Darwin, in a regional context of Asia, to be a key player in partnering with those significant hospitals in the South-East Asian countries.

In times of crisis throughout the region, Australia has always been able to harness trauma and critical care teams that fly from the capital cities. In particular, I have been associated with the work of critical care teams sent from New South Wales and Western Australia to provide that front line service that has always been welcome by our near neighbours. We will continue to see significant incidents and events in which people will be injured and loss of life will occur. It is those who have the trauma of injury, the counselling that is required and the medical intervention and support that forms the basis of a healing process. In that context, we will always continue to provide the medical teams that are required. The decision by the Hon. John Howard to establish a significant centre to deal with critical care and trauma in Darwin speaks volumes in terms of the commitment that Australia gives to its neighbours.

I have had the privilege of working with Dr Fiona Wood, who has been involved with burn victims, and I know the emotions and feelings that went through her when she started to deal with the people who survived the Bali bombing and had severe burns. I heard her speak recently where that emotion is still very raw within her, even though the event occurred some time ago. The Northern Territory and the Royal Darwin Hospital have staff in a critical centre not only to provide for the needs of people in the Territory and across the Top End but also, more importantly in times of crisis, to be close at hand and not four hours away when there is a need for that level of experience. I do not think Australia will ever resile from, and I certainly do not see any government resiling from, its continued support for the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre because it plays a leadership and research role within the tropical climate and region as well. With the release of the government's position paper on Asia, it puts us in a prime position to be a key player in the provision of training, medical understanding, research and those other key and critical elements. The way the service has been provided is an outstanding commitment, initially by the Howard government and then by subsequent governments to continue to provide that level of service.

I want to acknowledge all of those who are part of that national centre, because it gives me that real strong sense of a commitment. It also enables the connectivity to the experience and skills that are south of Darwin, but at the same time having a point of coordination out of
Australia in Darwin that will link to all those critical points that will need to be established. The contribution is welcomed, given the significant events that have occurred previously—in Bali and Aceh when we flew critical teams there; and other events such as with the drownings and the people seeking asylum in this country. Again, this centre is in close proximity and will provide immediate emergency and trauma treatment as required. Deputy Speaker Grierson, I thank you for the opportunity and certainly support the member for Solomon's passion on this issue.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (19:57): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on this very important motion that is before the House today. We all remember the trauma suffered by people on 12 October 10 years ago. At that time, I visited the Darwin hospital. I spoke to those wonderful, dedicated health professions who are involved in the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre at the hospital. I was overwhelmed by their dedication, by their sheer skills and expertise, and by their ability to react to a situation like they had following the Bali bombings. It is not only their skills but also their special, special personal attributes which make them able to do that kind of work.

The National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre is a key element of the Australian government's disaster and emergency medical response for both national and international incidents. It is located in a very special place in Australia, an area where there are no other health resources like those that are available at the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre. I congratulate the member for bringing this motion to the parliament so that we can acknowledge the fine work done by that centre. The centre ensures that there is enhanced surge capacity at the Royal Darwin Hospital, to provide a rapid response in the event of a mass casualty incident in the region.

I have been fortunate enough to visit that hospital to see the centre and to speak to those health professions who actually respond and run the centre. They provided us with a breakdown of the way the trauma centre operates. I know that members of this House really appreciate the work that they do. They inject $9.2 million a year to fund 58 medical nurses and allied health profession, NCCTRC positions. That body also gives funding to Darwin Hospital. They provide training and education to the trauma centre and there are significant investments to see trauma and disaster training given to clinicians from the Northern Territory and Australia. So it really has that very special role of being able to respond but, at the same time, to be able to train. It is a unit that is set up to respond to those one-off critical incidents that we do not expect to happen. It links into the training courses through AusMAT and it also has the ability to call in other personnel who have had the proper training. The trauma response centre responded to incidents in 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2010 and it has been involved in the second Bali bombing, East Timor unrest and many other incidents. It is an asset that has also been used to respond to other local disasters, including cyclones. It is a unit that provides leadership and has expertise does not exist anywhere else. It is a unit that has research potential that is then used in that leadership role to respond in times of disasters and critical incidents.

I congratulate the member for Solomon for bringing this to the parliament. I suspect it is in her electorate and it is an organisation she can be exceptionally proud of.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (20:02): I rise to support my friend and colleague the member for Solomon, Natasha Griggs, in her excellent motion. I echo the words across the chamber
from the member for Shortland and the member for Hasluck, who have spoken before me. It is often said that during the darkest of times amidst the violence, grief and hardship we also get to see the best of the human spirit: heroic deeds, self-sacrifice and caring. Certainly this was the case after the terrorist attack in Bali. It was only a few weeks ago that in this place we commemorated the 10th anniversary of the bombings. During that period we have had the opportunity to remember, to grieve with the families of the 202 people who were killed, 88 of whom were Australian citizens. We reflected on the ongoing impact of this terror on those that survived and those that helped the survivors. Many fine speeches were given in the House on both sides of the chamber, making it one of the more poignant moments in this parliament's history.

Today I want to focus on the excellent work done by the emergency workers in Bali many of whom risked their own lives to get critically injured patients to hospital in Indonesia and Australia. Within 26 hours of the attacks the first patients arrived at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Sixty-one patients arrived at Darwin and 48 were then taken to other hospitals throughout Australia to receive specialised medical care. The work of the medical staff in these hospitals in saving lives and treating patients will endure as one of the great achievements in Australian medical history.

This terrible terrorist attack made it clear that, despite the excellent work that was done, there was a need for a national critical care and trauma centre with a specific mission to respond to disasters and major medical incidents in our region. The Howard government delivered this in 2005 and the core focus of the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre is, as they say themselves, to be equipped, prepared and ready to respond to emergency events here and overseas. Sadly, the centre has been used regularly since its establishment, often multiple times in every year with the exception of 2007, for incidents such as the second Bali bombing, unrest in East Timor, the East Timor presidential assassination attempt, the Ashmore Reef SIEV 36 incident, the Pakistani floods, Cyclone Helen and the Ghan derailment. These kinds of incidents and the professional, highly skilled and immediate response from the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre only go to further prove the critical role that medical health and medical research play in our society. That is why I was so personally disappointed to see the kinds of cuts to medical health and research that we saw in the most recent MYEFO, with over $1 billion ripped out of the sector. Without medical research we may not have the next Marie Stoner and Dr Fiona Wood, the Australian inventors of spray-on skin—a treatment that was so critical in the treatment of the Bali bombing victims.

Critical to the success of the NCCTRC is its ongoing program of education, training and research. I call on the government to support this motion to support medical research and to continue to support institutions like the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, who do so much good work for our community and for our relationship with those regional communities overseas as well.

Debate adjourned.
**Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease**

Debate resumed on the motion by Mr Stephen Jones:

That this House:

1. notes that:
   a. Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease (CMT) is the most common form of inherited motor and sensory neuropathy;
   b. there is no cure for CMT and while most sufferers live a normal lifespan, many do so with severe disabilities;
   c. estimates are that around one in every 2,500 Australians is affected by CMT;
   d. while CMT is more common than diseases such as Muscular Dystrophy, there is a low level of community awareness of CMT, particularly amongst Indigenous Australians;
   e. genetic counselling and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis means that those carrying the CMT gene can now conceive without the 50 per cent risk of passing CMT to their offspring; and
   f. despite the advances, detection and genetic counselling, low awareness and detection of CMT means that this disease is still spreading to future generations, when it could be stopped;

2. notes the need for more investment for research into the cause, care and cure of CMT; and

3. as a first step, calls on the Government to provide funding for projects which will lead to the eradication of CMT.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (20:06): Sometimes when you read the motions on notice for private member's business it can read a little bit like a triage sheet at a major hospital in any capital city around the country. Against that background, it is a little bit surprising that the words Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease have never been mentioned in *Hansard* before—particularly given that it is the most common form of inherited neuromuscular disease. Despite this, awareness of the disease is extraordinarily low. That is why I am pleased to have brought this motion before the House and to make a few comments tonight about Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease.

I would first like to acknowledge the presence in the chamber tonight of my constituent, Dr Scott Denton, and his partner Dr Jo Coghlan. I would also like to acknowledge the presence in the chamber tonight of Darryl Beitsch, who is the national president of CMT Australia, and is joined by his wife, Robin. I welcome them to Parliament House and to this chamber tonight.

I take this opportunity to commend Scott for his work in raising awareness of CMT and for putting so much of his time and energy towards ensuring that the Australian and New South Wales governments take notice of CMT and the needs of those who suffer from this disease. Last week I had the pleasure of introducing Scott and Jo to the Minister for Health. Not surprisingly, Scott was the first patient with CMT that the minister had ever met.

Given the low awareness of CMT, many may ask: what exactly is this disease? Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease is the name given to a group of disorders that primarily affect the periphery nerves. The degeneration of motor nerves means a loss of ability for nerves to communicate with the body's extremities—the arms, the legs and the feet. That means that sufferers of CMT find it hard to stand for very long or to remain mobile. Trips and falls are an obvious risk.

Sometimes the disease gets confused for other disorders. Sometimes when in public people are confused for even being drunken and disorderly. Ignorance of CMT means that many of
us mistake the symptom of physical unsteadiness for some broader disability of affliction. The consequences of the physical challenges of living with CMT are that those with CMT face many obstacles in trying to maintain social contact and to remain in the workforce—yet, unlike many other diseases and disorders, they live a normal lifespan.

It is of great concern that the low level of awareness of CMT means that it is frequently misdiagnosed in Australia and, once diagnosed, it is difficult for sufferers of this disease to then receive the treatment and support that they desperately need. Physiotherapy, rehabilitation and allied health care can all slow the progression of symptoms of CMT. Whilst there is a clinic at Westmead Hospital for children who suffer from CMT, there is no clinic in Australia for adult sufferers. Advances in DNA testing and better affordability mean that the estimated prevalence of CMT shows that it is far more common than previously thought. It is estimated that one in every 2,500 Australians is affected by CMT, but it could be much more prevalent than even that. In particular, it is statistically likely that the prevalence of CMT is enormously undiagnosed amongst Indigenous Australians because, to date, only one Aboriginal family has been diagnosed.

Naturally, with such a debilitating disease, the direct and indirect costs of CMT are significant to the sufferers and to the public purse at large. Unlike comparable diseases such as muscular dystrophy and Parkinson's disease, no data on the costs of CMT exists. For many reasons, including the human impact—not just the cost—it is important that the frequency of CMT is reduced. As a genetic disease, that means that gene discovery, preimplantation genetic diagnosis, or PGD, and genetic counselling are required. Scott and Associate Professor Joshua Burns, who is at the forefront of medical CMT research in Australia, have developed a three-step plan to reduce the financial burden of CMT. There is a clear case for more investment into the cause, the care and the cure of CMT. For that reason I have brought this motion before the House. I welcome Scott, Jo and the others to the House today to draw it to the attention of members, who are responsible for passing legislation on all manner of healthcare matters. This needs to be brought into public awareness. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms O'Neill): I take the opportunity to formally welcome Scott and Jo to the Federation Chamber. Thank you for your civic participation in helping broaden the understanding of this important disease.

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (20:11): I rise to speak in support of the member for Throsby's private member's motion on Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease. I thank the member for Throsby for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I also welcome his constituents and thank them for taking the time to come to the House tonight. I say to them: this disease is important and you are important, and you have done a very good thing to promote understanding of this illness.

If someone told you that you had this disease and you had never heard of it before, you might assume it had something to do with dental care or dental health, but this is nowhere near the truth. That, however, illustrates the lack of awareness about CMT disease. It is a rather common and yet little understood genetically inherited neurological disorder found around the globe. Its unusual name derives from the three neurologists who discovered the disease in 1886. As the motion states, there is a low level of community awareness about this disease, which is also known as inherited motor and sensory neuropathy, and yet it is in fact
the most common form of genetic or inherited neuromuscular disease. Around one in every 2,500 Australians is affected by this disease. Recent international studies have indicated it may be far more common. As the member for Throsby pointed out, because of some of the difficulties in diagnosis, it may be closer to one in 1,000.

CMT is characterised by the progressive degeneration of foot muscles and muscles in the lower leg, hand and forearm, as well as a loss of sensation in limbs and digits. Ninety-five per cent of those with the disease experience weakness in the lower limbs. Whilst not fatal or impacting on life expectancy, it can certainly adversely impact on the quality of life of those with the disease. As life tends to tell us over and over again, we are never able to predict what fate life's deck of cards will deal us. Typically, the first sign is a high-arched foot and problems with walking. Other symptoms include bone abnormalities in the foot and hand grip. It becomes difficult to open bottles and jars and do the basic things like operate taps in the home. It can bring poor balance and tumbles and falls, cramping in the legs and forearms, reflex issues, sight and hearing loss, and, occasionally, scoliosis, or curvature of the spine. This all occurs at a slower rate as the nerves gradually degenerate, making muscles weaker because of a lack of nerve stimulation. Symptoms for this disease appear by the age of 30 in most cases and, of course, that is so young. CMT currently has no cure. This presses the issue and importance of this motion and its aim—to raise awareness of this disease and encourage investment into research into the causes, treatment and preferably a cure. Though it is more common than muscular dystrophy, CMT lacks the community awareness that is often required to bring such issues into the spotlight in order to bring about constructive change and results. Though presently incurable, there are treatment options that do alleviate symptoms, including leg and ankle braces, orthopaedic shoes, physical therapy, muscle training, stretching, low impact exercises and orthopaedic surgery.

But what a regime! Would it not be better, however, to have no symptoms to treat if we could find a cure. The University of New South Wales report, the Cost of Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease on the Australian Economy, states that neurological disorders like CMT accounted for 12 per cent of Australia’s disease burden and injury in 2003. There is limited data on the cost associated, however, to do a direct comparison with muscular dystrophy; in 2005 almost 3,500 Australians had MD with an associated financial impact of $435 million. Of this, $236.2 million was lost in productivity and $117.8 million in cost to carers, as well as many other additional financial burdens experienced by sufferers and their families. With the knowledge that CMT disease is far more prevalent than MD it is possible the costs are similar or more pronounced.

The member for Throsby informs me that my region, Newcastle, has an above average prevalence of this disease. I was not able to establish that but it is part of the problem—we just do not have the data. I would like to know. Research conducted at the University of Newcastle by Dr Fiona Hawke in 2011 has revealed a previously unrecognised link between calf cramps and hand tremors in children with CMT disease type 1, that worsen with age. Of course, we do require greater research into CMT and its causes and increased funding towards such endeavours is essential. I am very pleased to support this motion and thank the member for Throsby for bringing this to our attention.

Debate adjourned.
Debate resumed on the motion by Mr Entsch:

That this House:

(1) notes the
(a) uniqueness of the relationship between Australia and Papua New Guinea (PNG) given the physical proximity of the Western Province to the Torres Strait, and the familial and cultural ties; and
(b) Torres Strait Treaty with PNG (ratified in 1985) that provides for Torres Strait Islanders and the coastal people of Papua New Guinea to carry on their traditional way of life, allowing for traditional people from both countries to move freely (without passports or visas) for traditional activities in the Torres Strait Protected Zone;

(2) acknowledges that an increased level of obligation from within existing resources is required to work towards improving the health and well-being of our closest international neighbours;

(3) recognises that:
(a) there is an ongoing crisis in the Western Province region, particularly in relation to the incidence of tuberculosis and other highly-contagious diseases; and
(b) while the Government has pledged $8 million over 2011-12 to 2014-15 for the South Fly District Tuberculosis Management program, it is evident that sufficient medical support and financial resources are not reaching services on the ground;

(4) calls for a review of administration of AusAID funding for the provision of South Fly District Tuberculosis Management;

(5) calls on the Australian Government to ensure it is working closely with representatives from the PNG Government and the PNG Treaty Village Association towards establishing a long term solution;

(6) reviews priorities within the AusAID budget to enable full funding to be restored to the Saibai and Boigu clinics, to provide necessary support until such time as capacity has been established in the 13 Treaty villages; and

(7) recognises that if current policy is to continue unchanged, the health and safety of Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians will be in jeopardy, as evidenced by the recent arrival at Cairns Base Hospital of the first case of multi drug-resistant tuberculosis.

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt—Chief Opposition Whip) (20:17): This is an issue that is very close and dear to my heart. After a recent visit to Daru in the Western Province, I remain absolutely committed to raising the profile of this issue and getting some level of resolution to the dreadful situation in which we found ourselves in that area. I welcome the opportunity to speak here today.

The tuberculosis situation has deteriorated over the last decade at the same time as Australian aid funding has continued to increase. Papua New Guinea is now Australia's largest recipient of aid money, receiving more than $490 million in the 2012-13 financial year, yet at Senate estimates last month it was revealed that only $5.8 million is spent on programs relating to tuberculosis. This is despite Papua New Guinea having the highest infection rate of tuberculosis in the world and having a 43 per cent increase in tuberculosis infection rate during the course of the last decade.

I appreciate that managing, distributing and ensuring that the funds are effectively used is not a simple job and there are language and cultural barriers, differences in systems, a lack of accountability—corruption is quite rife—and there are physical barriers such as distance and terrain and technological barriers such as a lack of communication in many areas of Papua
New Guinea. But I am stumped as to why time and again this government continues to take advice from AusAID officials who do not accurately reflect the reality of what is happening in that region. The government continues to feed money into World Vision, which, by their own admission, has no presence in the Western Province, with their closest presence being in a village called Tabugal, which is 470 kilometres up into the mountains adjoining Ok Tedi. Tabugal is actually a holiday destination for expats who live in the area and work in Ok Tedi. Access to those areas for treatment of tuberculosis is impossible for people living in the coastal areas of the Western Province. The sea ambulance was bought by AusAID more recently at a cost to the Australian taxpayer of some $460,000 to get it operational. Village leaders of the 13 treaty villages on the Western Province facing the Australian coastline told me in no uncertain terms that they did not want the boat. They said it would not work, it had too deep a draught and it would not get into the waterways it was supposed to access. They were ignored by AusAID; they were told, 'Let's wait and see.' They knew what the problem was going to be, and we understand that this boat has not visited these villages since June. In fact, there was a Four Corners program recently where they decided they should get operational, so they did a run around the harbour and then parked the boat. It is absolutely ridiculous.

They talk about this so-called hospital in Daru. I visited, and it is worse than a pigsty. It is disgusting. To suggest that this is something that is going to give people an opportunity to get well is an absolute nonsense, and a lot of the issues were highlighted in that Four Corners report. While the reporters were there and while the AusAID officials were surrounding them, they had masks, and they steered them into areas they wanted to show them but, as soon as they went back and visited the villages without the officials, we suddenly got a very different show and a very different situation.

Despite the millions that have been spent, you have only to visit the area to see that sufficient medical support and financial resources are not reaching the services on the ground. There is no question about it. Clearly, if the government is making decisions based on the advice of AusAID officials, we need to look very closely at that advice and the agendas of those officials. It is not good enough that they are simply trying to tick boxes and present a front that everything is fine when the reality is that everything is falling down behind them. A perfect example was the ABC Four Corners report, which visited the area to investigate the rise of antibiotic-resistant superbugs. They visited that hospital under the supervision of AusAID and contacted doctors. Masks were on, isolation wards were full—then an hour later they visited and there were no masks in sight and the isolation ward was empty. It is disgraceful.

There is a solution out there, and it comes in three parts. The leaders of the Treaty Village Association know the answers. They have contracted an organisation based in Cairns called the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, and they have a very strong expertise in tropical research management and delivery. On the PNG side they are a registered corporation. Kebi Salee, from the village of Sigabadu, is the chair; Anton Narua in Daru is head of the anticorruption unit in the Western Province—yet we do not want to listen to these people even though they have a very good story to tell. The Treaty Village Association has contracted the RRRC, funded by the PNG government to the tune of A$7.5 million, to set up a ranger station in those 13 villages. I have met with the minister here and offered the services
of the RRRC to provide health workers in the 13 villages so that they can administer the drugs necessary to deal with these problems regarding drug-resistant tuberculosis. Unfortunately, the minister decided to continue to take the advice of these AusAID officials. The RRRC has been incredibly successful.

The second part of the solution is the YWAM ship that is based in Townsville. They have an incredible record and have done a wonderful job up there. They have the confidence of the Papua New Guinean people and they are able to move into areas up there and take people in. They have operating theatres full of volunteers and can access areas that AusAID vessels cannot go near. Again, the government does not want to listen to them.

The third part is to build a new hospital, and that can be done by accessing the $1.46 billion sitting in a trust fund in Singapore. It was supposed to be for the education and health of the people of the Western Province, and for sustainable development. It used to be run by Professor Ross Garnaut. We wonder why, instead of using money to build hospitals and other infrastructure, they are building things like mega wharfs and gas pipelines. You have to wonder why, as a director of Lihir Gold or of Ok Tedi Mining, there is not a conflict there? It is the only place in the world, that I am aware of, where mining companies actually get their infrastructure built by funds that have been set up to help the local people. It is quite unbelievable, and we need to be looking at that area.

This hospital can be built. The Treaty Village Association should be involved in the building of it to Australian standards with quality accommodation for their staff. It can be mentored and guided through by Australian professionals and we can find a solution. We need to start looking at that fund to build this hospital. We need to review their administration of AusAID funding for the provision of the South Fly district tuberculosis management program. The funding should go into programs administered and managed in partnership with the local people who will benefit, not to international organisations who cannot demonstrate outcomes or to corrupt high- and mid-level officials who are buying houses in my area in Cairns.

I therefore call on the Australian government to work in partnership with the PNG government, the PNG Treaty Village Association and RRRC towards establishing long-term solutions. A key element that Labor must review is its priorities within the AusAID budget to enable full funding to be restored to Saibai and Boigu clinics in the Torres Strait to provide necessary support until such time as capacity has been established in 13 Torres Strait villages.

We already see one person die of tuberculosis every two hours in PNG. There is a young girl, unfortunately, in the Cairns Base Hospital, who will live in isolation for the next two years while she gets treatment for XDR-TB, which is extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis. Further, seven cases were discovered in Papua New Guinea last month including two in Daru. PNG minister for health, Michael Malabag, has already described XDR-TB as, 'A time bomb for PNG', and I dread the day that the first case of totally drug-resistant tuberculosis is diagnosed. At that point, you are basically going to quarantine the village and let them die because the disease is so virulent it will spread and nothing can cure it. All of this is happening in villages less than five kilometres from the Australian border. If we do not see any policy changes these people will continue to die unnecessarily, and this disease will stake a claim in Australia. I know that as a society we are better than this, and that is why I am urging this House to act now before it is too late.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
Mr MARLES (Corio—Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs) (20:27): I rise tonight to oppose the motion that has been put forward by the member for Leichhardt. Whilst I very much respect the work that the member for Leichhardt does within his electorate, which of course includes the Torres Strait, when talking about issues as serious as tuberculosis, when we are talking about the way in which lives are being affected and what is being done, all of us who participate in debates of this kind have a responsibility to get the facts straight. We have a responsibility to actually do the research and look at what is going on so that we get the facts straight, because a little bit of information without knowing the whole thing and without getting the whole thing right can be very dangerous, and that is what we are seeing in this resolution that is being moved in this parliament this evening.

In 2012-13, Australia will commit $104 million to strengthen health services and systems in PNG through the provision of essential medical supplies, through training health workers and through developing infrastructure with other partners within the health system in PNG. Health reforms require improved capacity of the health system to deliver new services and fight diseases such as TB, malaria and HIV, as well as making sure that we improve maternal and child health.

AusAID has already committed $11 million in support to PNG to specifically tackle tuberculosis in the Western Province. $3.5 million of that was spent in 2011-12. AusAID funds specialist TB staff, the training of health workers, provides equipment and medication and a health patrol boat,—and that patrol boat is due to carry out 19 days of TB outreach activities in November—and provides laboratory diagnosis in Australia of drug resistant TB in PNG. We are working very closely with the Papua New Guinea government and indeed the government of the Western Province towards assisting PNG to improve TB services for those in need, including those within the Western Province.

The controversy around TB in the Western Province has arisen out of a decision of Queensland Health's in relation to its funding of the health centres in the Torres Strait. The Australian government's work in the Western Province, through AusAID's support, is and has been initially focused on Daru, the major town on the South Fly coast, where the majority of TB cases are located. We are upgrading Daru's hospital's TB facilities and constructing a new TB isolation unit and a TB ward. We are providing TB staff, including a specialist and a coordinator of the facility. We have put in place an infection control specialist who is also being funded by AusAID to provide advice to staff at Daru Hospital about increasing patient compliance with infection control procedures, which is fundamental to dealing with the issue and the disease of TB. We are funding a master plan, which will be ready in February of next year, which will identify the best course of action for upgrading the hospital and the facilities at Daru.

Daru Hospital has improved dramatically with AusAID's support of its TB services, and these are now among the best that are available in PNG. Two hundred and sixty-eight patients have been treated for tuberculosis in the Western Province since February of this year, including 92 Papua New Guineans who had been treated by Queensland Health in the Torres Strait clinics and transferred back to PNG. Sixty-five of those patients handed back from Queensland Health have now successfully completed treatment, and the rest continue to receive treatment under the supervision of a TB specialist doctor.
Mortality rates—and this is a very important point—from multidrug-resistant TB have reduced from 25 per cent to less than five per cent, which is a very good figure by global standards. The number of Torres Strait Islanders infected has also reduced from nine in 2010 to six in 2011. The independent World Health Organization technical assistance mission that visited PNG in October last year reported that patients diagnosed and started on treatment in Daru Hospital were receiving directly observed treatment to ensure that they fulfilled their course of treatment. This approach is endorsed by public health experts, including none other than the Commonwealth's own Chief Medical Officer and the World Health Organization, as being best practice. The World Health Organization will undertake an annual review of the approach that is being taken in PNG during the course of this month. There are now 63 volunteers and health workers undertaking directly observed treatment of TB patients in Daru and the South Fly region of Western Province. AusAID has helped fund these volunteers' training, and additional volunteers will be trained over the next three years to increase the coverage of directly observed treatments in the Western Province.

When PNG nationals were treated for TB on Saibai and Boigu they would often return to PNG after the initial stages of treatment. This made it very difficult to follow up patients to ensure that subsequent stages of treatment were administered. Patients often had to take medication every day from anywhere within six to 24 months. In September Dr Emma McBryde, the Associate Professor and Head of Epidemiology at the Victorian Infectious Diseases Service, who assessed the burden of TB and other diseases in the Western Province, at the request of the PNG government concluded that the treatment on Saibai and Boigu did not offer a solution to the problem of TB in the Western Province, and had little ability to improve the situation of TB in the Western Province, but had a great capacity to make it much worse. Dr McBryde also concluded that closing the Saibai and Boigu TB services was likely to reduce the risk of multidrug-resistant TB transmission to Australian residents. Australia is working very closely with the PNG government on this issue. At the Torres Strait Cross Border Health Issues Committee meeting on 30 and 31 October in Cairns, senior representatives from the PNG National Department of Health and the Western Province health administration, the Australian government and the Queensland Health met and discussed cross-border health issues including TB. Support for TB was also discussed by officials at the Torres Strait Treaty Joint Advisory Council meeting in Cairns on 25 October this year. A roundtable meeting will be held early next year to discuss best practice approaches to the management of TB in the PNG-Australia border region.

This government's efforts to tackle tuberculosis in Papua New Guinea are working. Dr McBryde reported a 50 per cent drop in the death rates from TB at Daru General Hospital from 2008 to 2011. For all that has been said on the other side, for all the emotional rhetoric that has been brought to bear here, the facts of the matter are that, because of the work AusAID is putting in, there has been a 50 per cent drop in the death rates from TB at the Daru General Hospital. Western Province health figures show an 80 per cent drop in death rates in the Western Province as a whole in the past year. There was an 80 per cent drop in death rates through TB in the Western Province over the course of the past year as a result of the work that the PNG health department, assisted by AusAID, are doing in the Western Province. That is the fact of the matter here. What we are seeing with this motion, at the end of the day, is an irresponsible scare and fear campaign around this issue. PNG Health Secretary Pascoe Kase has acknowledged and thanked AusAID for its support, and said:

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FEDERATION CHAMBER
We have a big problem with TB in PNG and the Australian Government, through AusAID is a major and valued partner with the Government of Papua New Guinea in helping to deal with this problem. He particularly noted the importance of the new TB isolation ward at Daru General Hospital, which is funded by AusAID. Australia's approach on this issue is the right one. We will continue to do more to support the PNG government to control tuberculosis. We are committed to working with them to deal with tuberculosis now and in the long term.

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (20:37): I rise to support the private member's motion of my parliamentary colleague, the Hon. Warren Entsch, the member for Leichhardt. No-one can doubt the member for Leichhardt's passion and diligence when it comes to pursuing this issue on behalf of his constituents of Far North Queensland and in consideration for the welfare of our nearest neighbours in Papua New Guinea. As much as I respect the parliamentary secretary who just spoke, there is one difference between him and the member for Leichhardt. The member for Leichhardt has actually visited Daru and has actually visited the Western Province more than once. He has visited the hospital, has taken photographs and has shown me and the opposition foreign affairs spokeswoman a range of photographs which display an appalling situation, an appalling excuse for a hospital. I will never forget some of the gut-wrenching scenes that I saw in those photographs. That is where the $11 million that the previous speaker, the parliamentary secretary, was talking about.

The member for Leichhardt has for a long time lobbied, spoken to the government and notified us all that he believes AusAID has been asleep at the wheel, and I wholeheartedly support him. He, more than anyone, has had firsthand knowledge and has seen firsthand what has been going on in the Western Province. AusAID has, indeed, been asleep at the wheel in its funding and its management of the failed tuberculosis programs in Papua New Guinea. During Senate estimates on 22 October this year it was revealed that, out of AusAID's $104 million allocation to the PNG health sector's budget for 2012-13, only $5.8 million was dedicated to programs relating to tuberculosis. As the member for Leichhardt quite rightly said, this amount of money is absolutely pitiful. The facts are disturbing, and the parliamentary secretary is quoting figures that have obviously been given to him by AusAID. PNG has one of the highest infection rates of TB in the world and a reported 43 per cent increase in TB infection rates over the last decade, and they are the facts. The most recent World Health Organization country profile—and I really support the World Health Organization; they do great work—said that there were 3,700 deaths due to TB in 2011. The mortality rate was reported as 53 per 100,000 people—hardly a ringing endorsement that the program is doing fantastically well. This is hardly a result that creeps up on you in the dark and it is not something that we should be proud of for our nearest and dearest neighbour.

What is even more disturbing is that this is just an estimate of the size of the problem. We do not really know how bad it is because, according to the School of Veterinary and Biomedical Science at James Cook University, there are insufficient diagnostic techniques and limited resources, and case detection rates of TB in Papua New Guinea are only 19 per cent. So as much as the parliamentary secretary can quote figures that health workers are getting to the problem, it is a huge problem. He spoke about the patrol boat. That particular patrol boat cannot even get to the villages, and they recently also sacked their TB specialist, Mr Morrow. That is pretty disturbing news.
This has been a piecemeal approach by AusAID and what is disturbing is that it is not tackling tuberculosis. The World Health Organization has described the level of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis in PNG's remote south-west as being of crisis proportions. AusAID's commitment of just five per cent of the current foreign aid health sector budget to PNG for combating tuberculosis is like putting a bandaid over an artery, and the epidemic levels of TB infection in PNG pose a huge risk to Australia. More needs to be done to halt the disease in PNG owing to the increased risk of the spread of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis and extremely drug-resistant tuberculosis.

Despite this being an international matter, the federal government has refused to fully fund health services for PNG nationals. Instead, what this government has done is force the Queensland government to accept a funding project agreement or risk losing $8.1 million in funding for 2010-11 and 2011-12. But the actual cost to the Queensland government is not $8.1 million; it is actually $32 million. So not only is this government without vision but it is also penny-pinching and buck-passing onto the Queensland government as a smokescreen for its own failures.

PNG is our nearest neighbour. We need to be doing more. AusAID has to stop and reassess what it is doing in PNG. Unfortunately, so much of the talk is about what has been happening with tuberculosis in PNG and so much of it has been about excuses and not finding solutions. This is not a small problem; it is huge. (Time expired)

**Mr Griffin** (Bruce) (20:42): This is an important motion and it covers a very important issue. As all speakers have said so far: it is a serious issue. It is a crisis with respect to tuberculosis for our near neighbour and it is an issue that demands action. However, that is when we start to divert, and the circumstances are very much a matter of what is the best way forward, what needs to be done, what is the real state of the problem and what particular aspects are keys to dealing with these issues.

I put on record my respect for the member for Leichhardt and his commitment to his area. He is a man of considerable ability with a real commitment to the top end of Queensland and with real knowledge of issues around the Torres Strait; however, I would also say I have met a lot of people in politics. It is an old saying—I cannot use the exact words on the record about calling a spade a spade and I think that some would say that Warren calls it a certain type of shovel. That bluntness is something that I admire on many occasions, but I sometimes wonder if it necessarily focuses on what needs to be done in a situation such as this. I think that he raised some important points in his speech and I only caught the last half of it in my office. What I would say is that some of those points probably need to be looked at. The real question is: where do we go from here? What do we need to do to address this issue?

We can all agree: TB in the circumstances that are now being faced in PNG is a very serious problem and there are real concerns about drug-resistant TB developing. We can then go to the question of what is best to do now. The question around Queensland Health's withdrawal of support and funding is something that I think the Queensland government needs to consider itself. What has been occurring in the province with AusAID, their attempts to try and work with PNG authorities, is showing some real signs of starting to work. I think some of the figures quoted by the parliamentary secretary point to the fact that there has been a real financial commitment from AusAID and from the federal government to deal with this issue. There has been a range of initiatives. The parliamentary secretary mentioned numbers
in relation to: specialist doctors; training of health workers; the provision of drugs; the refurbishment of an interim TB isolation unit; a new X-ray unit and GeneXpert machine, which diagnoses drug-resistant TB within two hours; improved communications with clinics in the Fly region; annual monitoring by the WHO; and a master plan for the redevelopment of the Daru Hospital. They are all things that need to be done and all things that need to be part of a programmatic approach.

The one thing we can all agree on is that there needs to be an approach which basically works on both sides of the border. There needs to be an approach which maximises the coordination and development of integrated support by Australian and PNG sources. There is an article in this weekend's Cairns Post by Geoffrey Miller. Geoffrey Miller is a public health practitioner who recently returned to Australia after three years based in Daru as the health advisor to the Western Province government. Some might say that he comes with particular views because of his position, but I think he makes some very good points with respect to the circumstances there. His point, in terms of reviews that have recently been done, and his view with respect to the way forward is that there needs to be a continuing development of the approach that is currently being undertaken.

It is going to take time to get this right, but some of the initial figures—for example, something like 80 per cent of the patients who were taken over post the withdrawal from Queensland Health having now completed with treatment—are a very good sign for the future. Therefore, the development of these services is something which I think we can have some confidence in. Is it a serious issue? Absolutely. Are we are in a situation where we are going to be having difficulties with TB in that area for the foreseeable future? Absolutely. But, working off the review of this area by Professor Emma McBryde, Head of Epidemiology at the Victorian Infectious Diseases Service, we can say some important steps are being taken in the right direction. There has been increased funding and there is, through that process and through the development of services, the opportunity to work through these issues and provide better health outcomes for the people of the Torres Strait and for the people of PNG in the Western Province. (Time expired)

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (20:47): Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this incredibly important area of tuberculosis in our region. I think Australians, people living in the Torres Strait and even citizens of Papua New Guinea, will be getting tired of these banal government reports about AusAID's efforts in Papua New Guinea: 'Doing well', 'Could do better', and 'Allow us a little more time.' Time is the one thing that TB patients do not have. A year and a half ago this Prime Minister wrote to then Premier Anna Bligh in response to a request for more financial assistance with the troubles that were being created in TI by the movement of TB infected PNG citizens across that two-kilometre stretch of water. The response from the Prime Minister was simple: 'There is no more money.' I need to make a very clear point to the previous two speakers on this issue of tuberculosis with PNG nationals: the impact of foreign nationals on the Australian health system is the responsibility of the federal government.

Since 1978, we have had a Torres Strait agreement with the Queensland government to compensate that state for the costs of PNG nationals. It is something that every government until this one has proudly compensated Queensland for. As the cost of TB began to escalate,
let us remember the previous Premier, Anna Bligh, sought more funding, and it was not forthcoming.

No-one is asking this federal government to solve the issue of tuberculosis in our region. That is what we are talking about. What we are talking about here is asking AusAID at the drop of a hat, within three months, to initiate a tuberculosis program in a part of the world where they have no experience. If you search the website for AusAID, you will see not a single TB program in Papua New Guinea prior to this request. Our only criticism from this side of the chamber is: you should have left more time for the good work that was being done in the Torres Strait to continue until Papua New Guinea picked up its capacity and could stand on its own two feet. I do not care how many WHO reports there are talking about the great work that AusAID has done in a limited period of time. This is a disease that is highly contagious, through spit, through speaking, through coughing, through sneezing or through close proximity with other infected people, particularly in areas where people have low resistance, low autoimmunity and even concomitant HIV. These people are at great risk and they are only two kilometres away from Australia. The surveillance issue has not been raised today, but the presence of qualified physicians at Saibai and Boigu is almost unable to be priced. It is wonderful and important, but it is now gone. To bring those clinics back is the responsibility of the federal government.

It has not been talked about in this place before, but in November last year a nine-year-old Papua New Guinean girl presented for care at Boigu—not once, not twice, but five times. The fourth time she had an extended abdomen and the fifth time she had cerebral TB. At each of those times she was told to go away, for no other reason than that the federal government had decided there was no more federal funding for TB in the Torres Strait. That young girl was evacuated too late to save her life and she died in Cairns. I hope it will be the subject of a coronial inquiry. This was the problem with dropping TI without setting up Papua New Guinea first. We do not ask for Papua New Guinea to solve the problem; we do not expect AusAID to cure the world; we just wanted concomitant care at TI to look after people like that nine-year-old girl.

Where is XDR-TB, multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, right now? There are six cases of it. Nobody has talked about them. Five are in Daru hospital and one is in Cairns hospital right now. One of those cases in Daru is the nurse who was looking after the other XDR patients. There were not enough masks and they were not worn often enough, and the care provider now has multidrug-resistant TB. So do not for a moment think that Papua New Guinea can just pick up the ball and run. There is limited capacity to diagnose this disease and work out appropriate treatments. If people are resistant to rifampicin, isoniazid and the quinolone family, you are left with just amikacin, capreomycin or kanamycin. Doing that in Daru is hard. Doing it in Mabaduan is close on impossible.

I have enormous respect for the people working at AusAID and those they employ, but you cannot expect this to be fixed in months. This is a year-long transition, but the Labor government could not find an extra nickel or dime to continue those clinics, and that has cursed the people of Daru and Western Province to be utterly reliant on an infantile TB program that will not be up and running for years. That is the great tragedy that will not be forgotten by the clinicians in Cairns or the nurses who visit Daru and TI and do the very best that they can with those who cross the Torres Strait.
Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh—Second Deputy Speaker) (20:52): It gives me great pleasure to be able to speak on this motion. I welcome the opportunity to speak on this particular motion of the member for Leichhardt. It goes to the issue of transitional management and treatment of infectious diseases, specifically tuberculosis and drug-resistant tuberculosis. I do so because I had the pleasure of visiting this region with the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing in preparation of our March 2010 report on regional health issues jointly affecting Australia and the South Pacific. We visited Daru and the Western Province, including some of the most isolated villages in the world, on the Fly River.

There was very clear evidence of AusAID's ability to deliver results on the ground. We saw firsthand projects in these villages on Daru where outcomes were being realised. That visit was a couple of years ago and a lot has changed since then, but the evidence is that the work of AusAID is well regarded by everyone that we met in PNG. Whether it was in the capital, Port Moresby, with the minister for health and many others that we met, or whether it was village chiefs in many isolated villages or the head director of the Daru hospital, they told us that AusAID is a vital part of their health program and that they endorsed AusAID's work in the region. Of course, AusAID's work is endorsed by public health experts, including the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer and the WHO. The assistance given by Australia to PNG through AusAID to assist with the management and treatment of tuberculosis in PNG's Western Province is a very positive step and very positive results are coming from it. Australia is assisting alleviate the problem of tuberculosis. The member's motion asserts that AusAID assistance is not hitting the ground and that medical assistance is not being delivered for the benefit of people's health. Let us be clear about this: the Queensland government cut funding to this region.

AusAID stepped in this February with $11 million over four years. This funding has enabled AusAID to pay for specialist doctors; the training of health workers; drugs to treat TB; the refurbishment of an interim TB isolation unit; construction of a new TB isolation ward, which will be delivered by mid-February 2013; a new X-ray unit; and a GeneXpert machine that diagnoses drug resistant TB within two hours of having the test. That is supported by laboratory diagnoses here in Australia to identify the strains of drug resistant TB. This funding has also been used to improve communications with clinics in the Fly River region. It has also funded annual monitoring by the World Health Organisation, as well as advice on infection control. There is a master plan for the redevelopment of Daru hospital to which AusAID will also commit funding for further capital works. These are things that are being done on the ground in the Western Province in this region, which is one of the world's most isolated. To extend treatment in communities outside Daru, AusAID has also provided a sea ambulance, which has conducted 12 outreach visits to villages on the Fly River coast since May.

The member's motion goes to the AusAID approach not working, being deficient and ineffective. Let us be crystal clear: AusAID's efforts in support of PNG's approach to the effective management of TB in the Western Province are working. Our health and ageing committee saw evidence of this first hand, with PNG officials, the health minister and other people on the ground telling us that AusAID was a vital part—an integral part—of their health system. Advice is that TB mortality rates in the Western Province have fallen by 80 per
cent in just one year and fewer Torres Strait people have TB. AusAID support has also led to many more people with TB in the Western Province being detected. It is very important to be able to detect those people so that they can be treated. The member opposite says that we should restore funding to the Saibai and Boigu clinics. And yet the best available advice is that this would make things worse.

Debate adjourned.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Debate resumed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grierson) (20:58): The question is:

That grievances be noted.

World Diabetes Day

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (20:58): I welcome the opportunity to use this grievance debate to talk about World Diabetes Day, which happened last week when the parliament was not sitting. We had an excellent lunch, which had been arranged by Diabetes Australia, at the Lodge. Mr Matheson was a gracious host and spoke compellingly about the challenge of diabetes in Australia today. World Diabetes Day came after a report called Diabetes: the silent pandemic and its impact on Australia was launched in Parliament House. That report is a research paper written by a very well-known Melbourne institute, the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, in partnership with Diabetes Australia and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. World Diabetes Day was marked across the globe on 14 November. The day is a reminder that diabetes is one of the most important healthcare challenges that governments around the world will face this century. At the European Diabetes Leadership Forum at Copenhagen earlier this year, former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan—a man who has seen many of the world’s conflicts, pandemics and crises—chillingly reminded his audience that diabetes kills more people worldwide annually than HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined. Even more sobering is the fact that Australia is on the front line. One study has found that if the rise in diabetes continues, up to 17 per cent of Australians will have diabetes by 2025. In fact, I believe that this is referred to in the study I mentioned. Unbelievably, we are on track to beat that prediction.

The message is clear that the government needs to act, but it needs to act in concert with all Australians. Every one of us has a responsibility for our own health. It is not just a government responsibility but governments need to lead the way. I am pleased to see the member for Hindmarsh in the chamber tonight, because he has been a long-term advocate for a comprehensive plan to combat diabetes in this country. He has been a long-term member of the Parliamentary Diabetes Support Group. We thank him, as the chair of Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, for his work to highlight the need to manage diabetes better than we have done.

Before this century reaches its half term, the global affliction of diabetes will have wrought incalculable harm to the quality of life of individuals, with consequences for the social fabric and the productivity of all nations. For richer nations the consequences will be drastic, but for poorer nations they will be catastrophic. All over the globe diabetes is an insidious blight to income, productivity, and life expectancy. The World Health Organization estimates that 347
million people worldwide have diabetes, and that without intervention the number will double by 2030. There are currently 2.9 million deaths each year directly caused by diabetes.

The global challenge of diabetes in the 21st century was the trigger for the United Nations resolution passed unanimously in 2006, which declared 14 November World Diabetes Day. But with diabetes rates growing worldwide, six years after the resolution there is little room for self-congratulation. It should serve to stiffen our resolve as a community to do better. Diabetes must be a national health priority, with an emphasis on prevention, diagnosis, treatment and research.

We continue to be confronted by escalating health costs and fiscal constraints—exacerbated by the deadly political inertia of a hung parliament, frankly. Amid all this we need to retrieve the crucial mantra that nothing succeeds like prevention. Prevention is both the best medicine and the best politics. And it is also the cheapest.

Undiagnosed, untreated or inadequately treated diabetes can lead to death preceded by multiple health conditions. It is a major cause of limb amputation, blindness, cardiovascular disease and kidney disease. Locally, it is estimated that 1.7 million Australians out of a population of 23 million have diabetes, with 280 new cases being diagnosed every single day. Over two million people have pre-diabetes, which is a condition where the blood sugar level is irregular, placing an individual at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Without diagnosis and appropriate intervention, more than 30 per cent of people with pre-diabetes go on to develop type 2 diabetes within 10 years.

The stark reality of the prevalence and cost of diabetes in Australia was outlined, as I said, earlier this year in a research paper by Baker IDI, Diabetes: the silent pandemic, and its impact on Australia. It projects a diabetic population of three million over the age of 25 by 2025. Type 2 diabetes was once called late-onset diabetes, as it mostly affected people over the age of 60. Yet today, children, particularly in the Indigenous and Pacific Island populations are being regularly diagnosed with the condition and being condemned to a future of complex and expensive care. I had the privilege of speaking with the Speaker of the Tongan parliament at dinner this evening and I know from my regular visits to New Zealand, where I have been invited to speak, that the Pacific Islanders have a particular challenge ahead of them, as so many people in the Pacific have diabetes. It is a huge challenge. He was telling me this evening that many of them cannot get access to kidney dialysis; they have to go offshore to have that treatment.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has warned that obesity is a major contributor to the diabetes pandemic. In the Betterlife Index of the last 20 years, Australia is identified as having one of the fastest growing obesity rates on the planet. It reveals that about 60 per cent of Australians are now overweight or obese. Baker IDI estimates that the total annual cost for Australians with type 2 diabetes is up to $6.57 billion per annum. This figure includes healthcare costs, the cost of carers and Commonwealth government subsidies.

The latest statistics in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare overview of kidney transplant and dialysis in Australia show that the rate of new cases of end-stage kidney disease, ESKD, has increased by 80 per cent and is largely diabetes related. Indeed over the preceding 18 years kidney replacement therapy for ESKD almost tripled as did the number of people on kidney dialysis. There is a wealth of grim documentation pointing to the
catastrophic cost of failing to diagnose early. The peak body Diabetes Australia estimates that there will be a 12-fold differential in the cost of managing advanced diabetes compared with early diagnosis and intervention.

A message that I have long promoted is that governments need not be afraid of the cost of diagnosing and treating diabetes; they need to be afraid of not diagnosing it and not treating it and then having to treat a number of complex conditions that result from not diagnosing and not treating diabetes. The dilemma for government therefore is whether to invest in prevention and relatively inexpensive treatment modalities, or continue to withdraw programs with an inevitable budgetary explosion affecting current and future generations.

Tragically, Australia today is without a coherent strategy for managing diabetes and has been without a national diabetes action plan since 2007. So tonight I would like to urge all my colleagues, particularly those who have long been involved with the parliamentary diabetes support group, to urge government to make a statement, to take leadership and to declare diabetes a national health priority.

This week we have the opportunity to speak to young people in this parliament at the Kids in the House event. They will tell their stories about what it is like to be a child living with diabetes and how that impacts on the quality of life. The other mission for us is to make sure that we do remember these children by ensuring that a cure for diabetes is forthcoming.

**Diabetes**

**Energy Prices**

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh—Second Deputy Speaker) (21:08): I was going to speak on energy and electricity prices tonight, and I will, but let me just reiterate what the member for Pearce said on this important issue. I had the opportunity this morning to speak on juvenile diabetes. I congratulate the member for Pearce for her tremendous work in this area. She will be sorely missed when she leaves, because this a very important area and she has continually kept it at the forefront of debates and discussions here in this place and has achieved great outcomes over the years while she has been advocating for diabetes.

Tonight I want to draw to the attention of the House the view of energy and electricity companies here in Australia that regulation of the electricity industry is weak and insufficient—a view that I have as well. Electricity companies are treating the existing electricity regulatory authorities with contempt. We all know that the price that the Australian public has been and is being charged for electricity has skyrocketed over the last four-or-so years. We all know that the system as it is has not kept a lid on power prices, in particular network charges, and that millions of energy consumers around the nation, millions of households, millions of families, have been put to the wall to continue to have this most basic resource in their homes. I would like the House to note that power companies themselves seem to think that tougher regulation of power prices is required to make power companies sit up and take notice.

Under South Australian law the Essential Services Commission of South Australia has legal responsibility for regulating the prices and price hikes charged by power companies. It sets the price of the standard electricity contract. The commission reached the conclusion a couple of months ago that wholesale prices were less than anticipated and that a consequent decrease in the price of the service contract would be in order. Around a quarter of South
Australians are on a standard contract and would benefit from a price decrease of some $160 per year, a substantial amount for many households. Naturally many members of the public were very pleased with this announcement and this news. As I said earlier, they have been experiencing astronomical price rises and increases for several years.

The suggestion that power companies may charge less has been responded to with venom from within the electricity industry. We have had reports of the Energy Supply Association determining that the price decreases will simply not be passed on to consumers as has been determined by ESCOSA. According to a report in South Australia's *Sunday Mail* on 18 November, Origin said it 'does not accept the Commission has jurisdiction or power to vary the price'. AGL, another energy provider, argued that ESCOSA 'failed to have regard to the particular circumstances of the South Australian electricity industry'.

But, worse than entering into an argument over the calculations, far worse than debating the relevant South Australian act and its coverage, we have had the companies saying that they will find other ways of keeping prices high in spite of any regulated decrease in what companies can charge consumers. If companies need to adjust one price downwards, they have said that they will recoup that money through some other charge. This is what some of these companies have been quoted as saying in the newspaper. Here we have companies notionally subject to the law of the land which seem to feel perfectly in their rights to dodge the determinations of the regulator and charge whatever they like. This should be of grave concern to us all, not just in South Australia but in Australia overall. I am sure that not one of us approves of being held to ransom by the providers of the essential service of electricity. And I am sure that people from states other than South Australia, even people of the opposition Liberal persuasion and of other political persuasions, would feel similarly to those people in South Australia who are absolutely outraged by the absolute contempt shown by some players within this vital industry to their own customers, the arrogance and contempt that some show, holding us over a barrel.

So I expect that people of all Australian states and territories will demand that political leaders of any and all political persuasions band together at December's COAG meeting and unite to fix the regulatory regime of Australia's power and electricity system. Anything less would be contemptuous of the Australian people just as some power companies are being contemptuous toward the Australian people. The Minister for Resources, Energy and Tourism recently observed the need for all levels of government to embrace key reforms to improve regulatory efficiency and to stimulate market competition and innovation. The minister noted that many of the key reforms that may ease future electricity price pressures are already well underway, such as improvements to network rules and a review of the appeals mechanism.

But we here and our state counterparts still need to bite the bullet and agree on further reforms that are required to drive greater efficiency in our energy system. We need to have all the players, including the state and territory governments, come to agree on the Australian Energy Regulator having the resources, the teeth and the ability to do the job that customers need it to do. We need all players, including state and territory governments, to agree to improve competition within the energy sector, enabling the creation of innovative products and market solutions on the basis of consumer preferences and demand.

If customers want to avoid the price spikes of peak demand and the outrageous power prices that apply to those very limited times, they should be able to. If customers want to
avoid the higher rates that apply during certain times of the day and the week as a matter of course, they should be able to. If customers want to tailor their power usage at home to the occasional use of appliances—be it their washing machines, dishwashers or the like—they should be able to create a package of electricity usage that maximises the use of the cheapest power available throughout the day and throughout the week.

At the moment, consumers are largely in the dark regarding the tariffs that now apply. When retail electricity companies are able to provide incentives toward these kinds of packages so that customers can customise their power usage to minimise their electricity bills, our future and the future affordability of power in Australia will look relatively bright—very bright indeed. But all things should be taken within context. We have had a lot of activity from the energy retailers vying for customer business by going door to door to pressure-sell contracts and their product to customers. We have heard quite a bit about this happening around the country, in particular in households with residents in more senior years, especially in my electorate. While I have been calling for price protection through competition and innovation within the energy sector, we also need consumer protection from pressure-selling and unwanted approaches and unpalatable contracts. Nothing is more annoying to potential customers than to have a salesperson lobbing up at your door at any time of the day, expecting you to drop everything and listen to their pitch so they can sell you their electricity product.

As you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, I introduced a private member's bill, the Do Not Knock Register Bill, into this place earlier this year, but I was very pleased to hear of the court upholding the Labor government's Australian Consumer Law in the context that I am speaking of. It ruled that any salesperson who knocked on the door of a household with a 'Do not knock' sticker readily visible on the door was risking a very substantial penalty, and we saw two court cases where two companies were fined heavily for doing just that. People have protection from the disruption of random sales pitches through the sticker on their front door, but we still need retail companies to create the means for customers to access packages which are more creative and more rewarding than they currently are, and we need those packages to be available for scrutiny and detailed consideration.

We still have a very long way to go in this basic, fundamental and elementary area of our domestic economy. This suite of services is absolutely integral to our quality of life and way of life. People all over Australia have been aghast at the 40 or more per cent price increase over the last four years. I think in this place we should all be demanding a hell of a lot more for the money of the people of Australia, including the option to pay much, much less for the basic supply of the limited power we householders and the householders of all of Australia need. The report in the Sunday Mail the other day showed that the electricity companies have absolute contempt for the regulator. (Time expired)

**Labor Government**

**Wyatt Roy** (Longman) (21:18): Today we find ourselves on the cusp of what should be the happiest of times: the annual festive season, with its celebration of love and harmony and prosperity, a time to pull our families closer, to be thankful and to do good to others. But, tragically, the activities of this Labor government have meant that numerous families will end of the year as they began it, with their hope dimmed and their aspirations crushed. The dual blunt instruments of Labor's economic policy, overtaxing and overregulation, will in too many cases leave little spare cash for Christmas. This should be a time for small business, the
lifeblood of our economy, to enjoy rest and recreation and enjoy the fruits of their hard work, but it is difficult to find any gift inside the swathe of government enforced red tape. Why is this federal Labor government so intent on killing our economy? What sort of crazy logic seeks to justify the jettison of the $20 billion surplus down the gurgler to the point of a staggering net debt of $147 billion? It is the biggest debt in Australian history and we, the Australian taxpayers, are now paying almost $20 million a day in interest to service it. In any regular Australian family, the hardworking forgotten families of our nation, that degree of money wasting would be beyond comprehension. It would be beyond the remediation of the world's best and brightest in the financial counselling world.

Let me share with the House some more jaw-dropping figures to chew on over Christmas. Under the Howard government, annual average GDP growth was 3.7 per cent. With Labor recklessly at the wheel since 2007, GDP growth has fallen to just 2.4 per cent. Inflation was just 2.4 per cent in the Howard years, but has now increased to 2.9 per cent under this federal Labor government. Growth in retail turnover has shortened to 4.2 per cent courtesy of Labor. Under the coalition it was significantly higher at 5.7 per cent. Building approvals grew by 14.6 per cent in the last year of the previous coalition government. This Labor government, due to its economic ineptitude, has presided over an extraordinary slippage—a 10.6 per cent decline in building approvals in the past 12 months.

Last week I met, as I have many times before, the human face of Labor's attack on hard-working and individual enterprise as I visited small businesses in my local community with the shadow minister for small business, the Hon. Bruce Billson, the member for Dunkley. These businesses are proud Queenslanders, beacons of hard work and true believers in hope, reward and opportunity. But under this federal Labor government, spirits are flagging. They continue to hope, but so long as Labour lingers they confess to wonder, is it hope against hope? I know a small shop owner in the suburb of Burpengary. How tight will his Christmas be when he is coughing up an extra $1,300 a month in Labor's carbon tax bills? Then there is the tracking and haulage operator from Caboolture, himself pursued relentlessly by the rise in refrigerant cost. Back in Burpengary, increasing overheads and reduced profit margins are crucelling the ambition and lifestyle of a popular coffee shop owner. This local business is desperate to hire more staff, but thanks to Labor's overregulation and inflexibility in the workplace he is too afraid to do so.

Let me be very clear about this: the coalition gets small business. Many of us, before entering politics, have been there. We know that small business is the pulse of a healthy economy, for not only does it perform a vital role in itself, but a prosperous small business reverberates in waves across our society. In short, a crippled small business sector is tantamount to a nation going backwards, not forwards. However, a re-elected coalition government would once again champion small business and drive it to new horizons. We will scrap the carbon tax to reduce the spiralling power costs that small businesses now have to pay without any compensation. We will cut red tape by $1 billion each year and implement a comprehensive deregulation agenda. We will simplify the administration of superannuation reporting, allowing small business to remit compulsory super payments for workers directly to the tax office. The ATO would then be responsible for disbursement to individual superannuation funds. We will establish a genuine root and branch review of competition laws to ensure that small and big business can compete on an equal footing. We will support
the rights of independent contractors and family businesses by extending unfair contract protections to small business. We will ease the paperwork burden by moving the administration of the national Paid Parental Leave scheme from small business to the government's Family Assistance Office. We will reduce lawlessness in the workplace by re-establishing the Australian Building and Construction Commission and we will build better infrastructure, with a special emphasis on lessening the bottlenecks on our gridlocked roads and highways.

These initiatives will lift productivity, cut compliance costs and help small business men and women of Australia share in the hope, reward and opportunity of a once-again proudly aspirational nation. A coalition government will aim to double the existing rate of small business growth, adding 30,000 new small businesses every year. We will champion small business to the hilt, because we know that is where people get a start in life, entrepreneurship is fostered and innovation happens. Labor still sees it fit to demoralise this very fabric.

Labor looked the Australian people squarely in the eye and promised there would be no carbon tax. As the countless small business owners and hardworking families across my local community know, there is a carbon tax. Labor vowed in its workplace relations changes that it would not be a cost burden to employers; another deception of the Australian people. Various alterations to modern awards under the Fair Work Act have resulted in some businesses experiencing labour cost hikes of up to 15 per cent. Labor promised there would be a one-in and one-out approach to regulation, but instead we get more dodgy Labor accounting. The reality is that there have 200 regulations in for every one out. That is 20,884 new or amended regulations for the repeal of only 104.

Additionally, Labor's superannuation changes have created a nightmare of paperwork and bureaucratic red tape for small business. This is after it assured voters that it would not be tampering with superannuation arrangements. Ironically, we have seen one concentrated area of focus on small business from the other side of the chamber. In last year's Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the government handed the Australian Taxation Office an extra $390 million for new compliance activity. How is that for some Christmas cheer? $390 million for the tax office to chase up outstanding income tax lodgements from an already cluttered, confused and often just-scrapping-by small business sector. I knew the Labor Party had small business on their mind at some point.

It is little wonder that small business start-ups have dropped by 95 per cent. The number going bankrupt has risen by 48 per cent. Today, there are 11,000 fewer small businesses employing than there were in 2007. As we pause to reflect this Christmas, let us be mindful of Labor's past year and its gift of a concerted attack on hardworking Australians while keeping the coalition's politics of opportunity and aspiration in our sights. For here is where there is light and there is hope, and even more than that, there are practical solutions for the problems facing our nation.

The coalition represent encouragement over subsidy, and offers a hand-up rather than a hand-out. We are for smaller and more efficient government. We fight for lower taxes. We believe the individual's right to choose is paramount. The coalition are about respect for all Australians and respect for their hard earned income. As I said in my first speech in this place: Governments don't have any money of their own; they only have the people's money, held in trust.
We will not abide by Labor’s waste and mismanagement; we will pay down debt, apply downward pressure on interest rates, wind back the operating costs for small businesses and so ease the costs of living for every Australian. The key to a prosperous economy is to curtail spending and boost productivity.

This Christmas, Australians are readying themselves for an upcoming federal election. They will ultimately face a choice between Labor’s bad Santa, who plays a devilish hand with the economy, and the aspirational values and prudent fiscal policies of the coalition. Labor will continue to promise this gift or that gift. The difference is, when the coalition promises, it always delivers.

Beef Industry

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (21:28): This is a grievance debate, and I have 10 minutes to talk about some of the things that grieve me. I will do that and then pay one some particular attention. There are a number things—many things. They are all local, but they are all state and national as well—no seatbelts for kids on buses; tasers; dental care not being part of Medicare as if our mouths are excised from our body; insurance prices in flood areas where people are costed out and some put in as flood prone by a map and yet they have never had water in their houses and never will; and also the saying that the private sector is more efficient. I have daily tales that can prove that wrong, and it is not a competition. The terms 'boat people' and 'queue jumpers' are terms that just should not exist, but are ones that are bandied around in a very callous way by a lot of people on all sides. There is also the SBS in Kyogle when we had the digital switchover—that is all fine. I have been told through SBS that they are not going to broadcast to Kyogle. I am taking that issue up and complaining about it. Coal seam gas mining companies are in the Northern Rivers where they are clearly not welcome. There is also the issue of lack of safe and affordable abortion. Who could not have been moved by reading about Mrs Savita Halappanavar's death in Ireland. It was in the Sydney Morning Herald on Monday, 19 November. God rest her soul, and I hope she has not died in vain.

That brings me to the state of the beef industry in Australia and particularly the model of representation that the beef industry has. I am going to give that some detailed attention tonight. It is a very local issue for my area, but it is also a state and a national issue. Some members would know of my concern about the model of representation of Australia’s beef industry. I observe and believe that the producers—particularly the family producers and smaller producers; there are a lot of them—are not getting the level of representation that they deserve or require. I have spoken about this matter before in this place and the problems of the model. The model was introduced in the nineties at a critical point. It was the producers themselves and the beef industry saying, 'We want self regulation.' That is fine. That is what they have got, but there is a whole lot wrong with it that has not worked to give a voice to the producers.

Both the Cattle Council of Australia, the CCA, and Meat and Livestock Australia, the MLA, are the two peak national bodies. They have been going through the motions of reform this year, and the only outcome I have seen so far is that the Cattle Council of Australia, which is charged with what they call some advisory role or oversight role of the MLA, will now get funding from the MLA to do consultancy. I do not see how this is going to assist the
representation of the producers. I will just read some experts from the Cattle Council of Australia's history, from page 1:

The Cattle Council of Australia—the national voice for beef producers—
I wish it was and it should be, but in Canberra it proves that it has not been. All governments
know that it has not been the voice that it should be here. They say they are the national voice
for beef producers. Ask the local producers what they think of that. I do not want to be
unkind, but they laugh when they read that. In their history they talk about on page 4:

Cattle Council was not completely happy with the MLA model determined by then Minister for Primary
Industries and Energy, John Anderson, but is working hard to make the new industry arrangements a
success. The major advantage of MLA over its predecessors is that producers are now totally in charge
of how their levies are spent.

That is not true. They are not in charge of how the levies are spent. The way that the voting
model in MLA, which is a company, works means there is no way they could be in charge of
that. It goes on:

In the past, other sectors, because they were forced to pay levies, had an equal, and at times dominant,
say in outlays and programs.

Then it continues:

Cattle Council has new responsibilities on behalf of beef producers in advising MLA, keeping abreast
of its operations and making a major contribution to the proper functioning of the Red Meat Advisory
Council …

And it says a number of other things. When you talk with producers and the local producers,
they say, 'That's nonsense. That doesn't happen.' They have not seen it. In my observations
and my readings—and I have read all the annual reports with CCA, with MLA and with all
the other bodies—that has not happened. Those roles have not been fulfilled. It is clear, even
the industry itself is saying that it knows it does not have a voice. The reason it does not have
a voice is that it does not have a single united voice. Yes, there are some separate issues in
different sectors of the beef industry, but there have to be, Mr Deputy Speaker, some issues in
common that it comes together on. We know what they are. It can at least have a united voice
on those, and say, 'Here are the five key issues facing the Australian beef industry today. This
is what they are and this is what we recommend.'

Do we hear it? No, we do not. We hear dead silence. I know there have been a lot of
meetings going on lately with CCA and with MLA, but particularly CCA. They had a
restructure committee. They had models put up to them, models A, B and C, and really it has
come to nought. People are disappointed. Some old hands who have been at it for years said,
'It will come to nought.' Others said, 'No, give them a go. Let them go ahead with it and see
what they come up with.' The key issue is that there needs to be a review of the industry
organisations and representation. Ideally that needs to come from them. That has been put to
them and people are still waiting for them to come up with it. When you hear from smaller
producers, what do they say? They talk about prices. They talk about getting effectively the
same prices they were getting years ago and then they will detail you some of that. I have read
what the MLA have said about that. They say it is to do with the high Australian dollar.
Others say differently. Economists say differently. There are different reasons. We need to
know. There is not enough information. The model of representation that they have is also
One that I do not see a great deal of transparency in. I do not see a great deal of transparency about how the producers’ levies are spent in the research and marketing.

One thing the MLA has said is that it has stepped out of politics and will stay purely with marketing and research. Some people say that is a good thing. It still needs to be very active. I note a previous CCA member, Mr Greg Brown, was calling for a review of the industry and he was calling for MLA to have that moved at one of their meetings. But of course it would not happen. My understanding is that the funding agreement with the government and with MLA talks about an audit that can be done. It is time that that audit was done. It is time that something should happen. The least that the MLA could do is have a democratic voting structure. We certainly do not have that there at the moment.

I have a couple of other points that I would like to make. It says here, it is really the last word and it goes to the producers. This is a summation and an amalgam of what some of the producers have said. They have said that essentially there are no material changes in representation and accountability. They have absolutely ignored the proposals put to CCA, and it says, ‘Levy paying cattle producers still do not have a voice in the management of their $56 million levy. It would seem CCA has sold its funding problem by securing ongoing consultation fees from MLA.’ Then it says, ‘Based on what producers said at consultations, it was recommended CCA take control of the levy. It would seem CCA does not want this responsibility.’ (Time expired)

Small Business

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (21:38): I grieve for the small business community and the inability or unwillingness of this Gillard Labor government to understand that small business growth and vitality is the key to our economy and prosperity and opportunities right across our communities. Most people think that the largest employer in the country is either the government or a big bank or a really big behemoth business. In fact that is not even close to the truth. The real big employer in the Australian economy is not big business, it is not big government—it is small business, with employment spread right across this continent. Whether it is the local real estate agent, the newsagency, the drycleaner or the cafe, these small businesses collectively employ almost five million people. Our economy depends on these men and women because they are passionate about their business and about creating jobs and opportunities for themselves and for others in their community.

But the engine room of our economy has been left under siege since Labor came to power in 2007. When the Howard government left office small business employment was 53 per cent of the private sector workforce. Now small business employs 45.7 per cent of the private sector workforce, and since the election of Labor the number of people employed in small business has dropped by 243,000 despite our growing population. This is having a negative effect on the overall state of our economy and it is not helped by the fact that Labor has introduced more than 20,800 regulations and has repealed only 104. This is despite the 'one on one out' promise towards regulation made by Labor in 2007. Instead of one in one out we get fitted up with 200 new or amended regulations for each one that has been repealed.

When the economy was functioning well and people were confident about their prospects and optimistic about the future, small business was thriving, with small business people willing to take risks and to employ. But wind back the clock five years and these people who were willing to take a risk and start their own business, choosing to be an employer rather
than an employee, now look at employment in someone else's business as perhaps a more secure option. Ask the children of men and women of small business what they want to do, and too many of them say, 'I see how hard mum and dad work. I don't know what I want to do with my life, but running my own business might not be for me.'

We need to change this, because without small business our economy is nothing. As a sector it is worth $294 billion to our economy and we need that energy, that vitality, that opportunity-creating energy that small business provides. The coalition believes that we can reverse the small business erosion by properly managing the economy and by partnering with small business to create the right environment for people to invest and grow their business. If elected, a coalition government would aim to double the current existing annual rate of small business growth. There is no reason Australia should not be able to achieve an annual growth rate in the numbers of small businesses of around 1.5 per cent per annum. This was the growth rate achieved by the Howard government, and it would mean adding approximately 30,000 new small businesses each year. Specifically, the focus would be on growing the number of small businesses that employ and provide jobs. The coalition wants to once again see small business providing more than half the jobs in the private sector, since that is where people get a start in life, where entrepreneurship is fostered and where innovation happens.

What sits behind this goal is the coalition's comprehensive 10-point plan that partners with the small business community, because we understand that a diversified small business economy is central to the overall prosperity of our nation. Our action plan would see a future coalition government axe the world's biggest carbon tax—a tax designed to hurt and harm small business intentionally as a result of its design. We would cut a billion dollars of red tape—a burden that lands most heavily on smaller businesses. We would help small businesses attract and retain workers through a fair dinkum, real wage, real time paid parental leave system, and we would ensure that small businesses are represented in cabinet and on key economic and regulatory bodies. In addition, we would also protect the rights of independent contractors by preserving their tax treatment, by ending this never-ending attack on self-employment and independent contracting orchestrated by unions that want to see the self-employed brought within the reach of the employer-employee relationship, so that the union influence and possible additional subs can be within their reach.

We want to extend the unfair contract provisions so that small business has the same rights as consumers, and also to enhance small business access to government procurement and contract opportunities. The establishment of a small business and family enterprise ombudsman, and our commitment to a root-and-branch review of competition laws, will also help to level the playing field so small businesses get a fairer go competing with big business and big unions.

These initiatives will deliver durable benefits to consumers in a more productive, resilient and innovative economy. Australia is a nation that has small business running through its veins, but the only way to help the sector and the economy to grow is to change the government. I grieve for small business that sees no opportunity under this current government and under the policies they are implementing, and I am committed to seeing the coalition implement our positive plan to support small business, hope, reward and opportunity. A second issue that I grieve about tonight relates to a very worrying episode that occurred on Remembrance Day this year. Rather than support the shared sacrifice and
commitment between Australia and France, the freedom and liberty secured for many at great cost between the two nations, there was an ugly incident—an ugly, unforgiveable and unjustifiable incident—on a bus between Mordialloc and Caulfield after the train services had been postponed due to a technical difficulty.

This ugly incident saw a Frenchwoman racially abused on that bus. This was a sad, unnecessary and un-Australian episode and it reflected very poorly on those who instigated it. But what followed was something that continues to concern me and the Frankston community that I represent. Mordialloc to Caulfield is not in Frankston but, in media reports, it has been suggested that this episode was perpetrated by people from Frankston or even occurred in Frankston where neither is the case. In fact the video that went viral on YouTube showed two of the perpetrators getting off the bus, one of them choosing to break the window adjacent to this young woman who did nothing more than sing proudly in French and, rather than suggest that others might have wanted to listen to something else, a tirade was directed towards her of racial and sexual abuse.

The dismounting passenger, who got off somewhere between Mordialloc and Caulfield, clearly broke a glass window as he left. There are reports that two people from Hampton Park have been questioned about that episode—again, nothing to do with Frankston. Yet as we look through reports, including those published in our own Leader newspaper, somehow it was a racist attack on a Frankston bus line. It was not; it was on a bus between Mordialloc and Caulfield. Even Joe Hildebrand, someone who grew up not far from Frankston at Dandenong, seemed to attribute the conduct as if it had something to do with our city of Frankston.

We go on: Nino Bucci and Jared Lynch also went on to clarify the point that it was Hampton Park residents who had been questioned by police but, again, the inference was left hanging that it had something to do with Frankston. Tim Blair, reporting in the Daily Telegraph, a Sydney newspaper, went on to say that it was a 'foul Frankston fellow' who conducted this appalling conduct towards the Frenchwoman—again, this is not right. It must bring people some false comfort to attribute episodes like this or some less admirable human qualities to a community that I represent. Frankston is a wonderful city.

Another French example I could point to is the executive from Alcatel. He has global experience and where did he choose to live? He chose to live in Frankston. Where is South East Water putting its corporate headquarters? That would be in Frankston. Where have we worked so hard to get the necessary infrastructure to service our community? That would be in Frankston. Where are opportunities so delicious you can almost taste them? That would be in Frankston. Yet still it is convenient, lazy, for some to attribute anything that is other than spectacular to Frankston, to deride its reputation when it has so much going for it, to not realise that there are so many opportunities in a community that has been maligned unfairly in the past and appears to continue to be when it is undeserving of that criticism.

I say to those people who have not been to the Frankston community for many years: update your understanding of this community. Some might challenge my view that it is the Riviera of the Southern Hemisphere. That is fine; I am happy to have that argument. But the opportunities in our community are real and they are attractive. It is a wonderful place to invest, a terrific place to live, a very warm and big-hearted community that takes care of its own and welcomes others. It carries a significant burden for supporting disadvantaged members of our community—that should be heralded and welcomed—and we are striving
ahead, despite hundreds of millions of dollars being invested in other cities around Melbourne, a mere fraction of which came to Frankston. So much going for it—do yourself a favour. There is lots to love about Frankston. Update your perceptions of a great community.

Moreton Electorate: Flyer

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (21:49): I rise to speak about a recent flyer distributed in my electorate. I usually prefer not to give air to these types of campaigns. Distributed locally but mass produced in another state—I do not want to upset the member for Shortland—in New South Wales in Lane Cove, which I understand is on the North Shore of Sydney, it was not even printed in Queensland.

Given the misinformation that is included in this flyer, I am compelled to outline the numerous examples where I feel I and the Gillard government have been grossly misrepresented and, I would suggest, defamed—not that I would pursue the people that have put it out there for defamation, but it is certainly very misleading. Last week, the Australian Hotels Association, whose name is attached to the flyer, distributed this flyer through their head office here in Canberra in response to legislation recently introduced by the Gillard Labor government, the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012. For the people of Moreton who did not receive this, it has a pretty rough picture on the front cover, but it is an accurate picture of me, so I cannot really complain about it. It does have the correct address for people to make contact with their federal MP, and I am always happy to talk to my constituents. Regarding the member for Petrie, the picture was slightly out of date—they had her with blonde hair. They also had the wrong phone number and the wrong address for her electorate. It would have been quite frustrating for those people trying to contact her. At least they had the right address and email address for me. And, as I said, I am always happy to talk to people about any issue. My office has assured me that we have had a lot of people contact me about this flyer—all to support the legislation that we have introduced.

Nevertheless, the flyer is quite confusing. The first claim that I would like to rebut is the statement that the laws introduced by the Gillard Labor government would create a 'Big Brother database'. That claim is made on page 2: 'Labor's laws would create a Big Brother database'. They suggest that players will be tracked on a government database and that player details will be provided to 'the ATO, Centrelink and the department of child safety'. This is totally wrong; totally incorrect. It could not be any further from the truth. There are specific provisions in the Gambling Reform Bill 2012 that ensure that all player information will be de-identified and will only be used to extract general problem gambling data. It is not about individual gamblers, but about general gambling.

In addition, these provisions also clarify that no individual information will be provided to or is able to be obtained by any government agency, whether it is the department of child safety, the tax office or Centrelink, which are listed here. It will not be able to be used by those government agencies. That is the first claim, that Big Brother claim, refuted.

Secondly, the Australian Hotels Association claims that these laws will greatly reduce community funding. They have two photographs on page 3. One is of a young boy a surfboard with the heading 'Community support will disappear'. The second photograph is of a young hospitality worker. The heading says 'Local jobs will be lost'. I would like to place on the record that I have recently met with representatives from the gaming industry, particularly from my local electorate and from my local clubs. We met at the Sunnybank Sports Club. I
sent out an invitation to all the clubs in my electorate and representatives from big, small and medium-sized clubs—even those with under 10 poker machines—attended. I received a letter from one of my local clubs in which they outlined that the recent Liberal-National Party state government gaming tax increases introduced at the recent mid-year budget are a major constraint on their revenue and will significantly reduce community funding. These gaming tax increases are indeed far more costly for small pubs and clubs than this government's legislation to reduce problem gambling.

One could argue that the Liberal-National Party tax hikes for small clubs and pubs are a bit of a revenue raiser and an attempt by them to extract money out of the community. They will have no benefit for the Moreton community. These Liberal-National Party state government tax hikes will also directly impact on staffing, which will perhaps have some impact on local jobs, although the clubs that I met with were comfortable with the current situation—I should stress that.

The flyer that has been distributed—this glossy four-page document—fails to mention these recent state government changes, the tax increases. It also incorrectly attributes job losses to the federal government's legislation to minimise problem gambling. This is all under the heading, 'Graham, why are you voting to hurt our community?' The reality is that the Gillard Labor government has entered into broad consultation with the industry and has listened to ensure that clubs and pubs with fewer than 10 machines, such as the Oxley bowls club, representatives of which came along to the meeting the other day, only have to replace the technology or machine when they need to—that is, at the normal turnover time—minimising the cost for small clubs. Perhaps the time and money of the Australian Hotels Association would be better spent condemning the state government for their blatant cash grab rather than fabricating material to fill this incorrect four-page flyer. I would actually write to my local state member about this issue and have him take it up with the Premier, but I did just see on the news that he has been banned from attending Liberal National party meetings, because he was not able to sign an affidavit saying that he was loyal to the Premier. I will have to find someone else to complain to.

Another anomaly I would like to point out is that the flyer claims that technology 'should be trialled before forcing venues to spend over a billion dollars on new technology'. I know Queensland clubs and pubs have been ahead of the game when it comes to adopting new technologies—far ahead of New South Wales, I point out to the member for Shortland—and we have addressed problem gambling with over 50 venues already in Queensland having trial voluntary pre-commitment. I would therefore suggest that this technology has been trialled, particularly in Queensland, and is proving to be effective. In fact, Queensland has one of the lowest rates of problem gambling in the country: 0.37 per cent. It is streets ahead of our neighbours south of the Tweed.

In addition, the federal government's legislation will also formalise the Australian Capital Territory conducting a trial into mandatory pre-commitment, so that we can better analyse and understand the differences for players between the two types of pre-commitment technology. I am also unsure where the figure of $1 billion actually comes from; that seems to have been plucked from the air. My understanding is that the new technology is estimated to cost approximately $2,000 per machine. I have had advice that it would be significantly less for each machine. Given Queensland poker machines already have advanced protocols, these
machines will only need to be updated and the technology installed rather than purchasing new machines—which I understand might have to happen south of the border.

These changes are to be phased in over time and many pubs and clubs in my electorate will not need to be compliant until 2020. You have eight years to actually prepare yourself for such an eventuality. I do not think that is being rushed through. As I have mentioned, other Queensland clubs will already have the voluntary pre-commitment technology, meaning that these legislative changes will mean very little for those clubs and pubs. This flyer that has been distributed in Moreton—went into my mailbox; obviously my opponent would not have got it because he does not live in my electorate—has a lot of misinformation. I think it has misled my community.

I suppose at least I can be grateful that, as I said, they did get my office contact details correct and my office even today has been making contact with the many people that have phoned up to say they thought it was me saying, 'We need to do something about problem gambling.' They were phoning in to offer their support. Maybe Des Crowe for the AHA needs to have a look at his material. The Australians Hotel Association are crying poor. It is my understanding, after talking to the member for Shortland and other MPs, that this has gone out to many marginal seat holders and other Labor Party members around Australia. They are crying poor, but that would have been a significant cost. They are arguing about the reduction in revenue for their pubs, but they are able to spend these thousands of dollars distributing ineffective and incorrect materials throughout Australia.

I understand that the views and claims in the flyer are not actually the views held by all hotels across Australia. I know many of the pubs in my electorate very well. Certainly I know my local pub, the Red Lion Hotel, that I can walk to. I do have a range of pubs: the Sunnybank Hotel, the Lucky Star Tavern, the Glen Hotel at Eight Mile Plains, the Oxley Hotel, the Oxley Tavern, the Muddy Farmer Hotel at Annerley, Chardons Corner Hotel and Rocklea Tavern. I have certainly had a beer in all of those pubs at some stage over the last five years. At some of them, I have had too many beers perhaps. I know that when talking to the local publicans and the people in charge of some of these chains in my electorate, they were not even aware that this information was being distributed. It is not exactly a grassroots campaign; it is a shiny brochure that is misinformation of the worst kind. I am looking forward to the Australian Hotels Association sending out correct information in the future and correcting the record.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! Time for the grievance debate has expired. The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order are not to be. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 21:59
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Finance and Deregulation: Staff Travel
(Question No. 1097)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, in writing, on 20 June 2012:

For (a) 2008-09, (b) 2009-10, (c) 2010-11, and (d) 2011-12, what was the total cost of overseas travel for departmental staff.

Mr Swan: The Minister for Finance and Deregulation has supplied the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

The total cost of overseas travel for departmental staff was:
(a) 2008-09 - $940,298
(b) 2009-10 - $818,725
(c) 2010-11 - $564,561
(d) 2011-12 - $448,926 (As at 31 May 2012)

In response to my announcement on 25 September 2012, Finance is further constraining air travel as far as practical.

Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio
(Question No. 1140)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:

In respect of Outcome 1, programs (a) 1.1 Prevention, early detection and service improvement, (b) 1.2 Communicable disease control, (c) 1.3 Drug strategy, (d) 1.4 Regulatory policy, (e) 1.5 Immunisation, and (f) Public Health, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

Ms Plibersek: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- Budget Measures (Section 1.3) – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- Outcome reporting (Section 2) – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
- Program report (Section 2) – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio
(Question No. 1141)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:

In respect of Outcome 2, programs (a) 2.1 Community pharmacy and pharmaceutical awareness, (b) 2.2 Pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical services, (c) 2.3 Targeted assistance—pharmaceuticals, and (d) 2.4
Targeted assistance—aids and appliances, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

**Ms Plibersek:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- **Budget Measures (Section 1.3)** – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- **Outcome reporting (Section 2)** – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
- **Program report (Section 2)** – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

**Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio**

(Question No. 1143)

**Mr Briggs** asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:

In respect of Outcome 4, programs (a) 4.1 Access and information, (b) 4.2 Home support, (c) 4.3 Home care, (d) 4.4 Residential and flexible care, (e) 4.5 Workforce and quality, and (f) 4.6 Ageing and service improvement, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

**Ms Plibersek:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- **Budget Measures (Section 1.3)** – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- **Outcome reporting (Section 2)** – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
- **Program report (Section 2)** – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.
departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- **Budget Measures (Section 1.3)** – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- **Outcome reporting (Section 2)** – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
- **Program report (Section 2)** – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

**Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio**

* (Question No. 1144)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:

In respect of Outcome 5, programs (a) 5.1 Primary care education and training, and (b) 5.2 Primary care financing, quality and access, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

Ms Plibersek: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- **Budget Measures (Section 1.3)** – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- **Outcome reporting (Section 2)** – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
- **Program report (Section 2)** – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

**Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio**

* (Question No. 1145)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:

In respect of Outcome 6, Program 6.1: Rural health services, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

Ms Plibersek: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- **Budget Measures (Section 1.3)** – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- **Outcome reporting (Section 2)** – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
• Program report (Section 2) – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

**Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio**  
(Question No. 1146)

**Mr Briggs** asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:

In respect of Outcome 7, Program 7.1: Hearing services, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

**Ms Plibersek:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

• Budget Measures (Section 1.3) – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;

• Outcome reporting (Section 2) – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and

• Program report (Section 2) – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

**Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio**  
(Question No. 1147)

**Mr Briggs** asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:

In respect of Outcome 8, Program 8.1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

**Ms Plibersek:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

• Budget Measures (Section 1.3) – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;

• Outcome reporting (Section 2) – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and

• Program report (Section 2) – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

**Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio**  
(Question No. 1148)

**Mr Briggs** asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:
In respect of Outcome 9, Program 9.1: Private health insurance, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

**Ms Plibersek:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency's resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- **Budget Measures (Section 1.3)** – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- **Outcome reporting (Section 2)** – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
- **Program report (Section 2)** – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

**Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio**

(Question No. 1149)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:

In respect of Outcome 10, programs (a) 10.1 Chronic disease—treatment, (b) 10.2 e-Health implementation, (c) 10.3 Health information, (d) 10.4 International policy engagement, (e) 10.5 Research capacity and quality, and (f) 10.6 Health infrastructure, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

**Ms Plibersek:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- **Budget Measures (Section 1.3)** – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- **Outcome reporting (Section 2)** – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
- **Program report (Section 2)** – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

**Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio**

(Question No. 1150)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:

In respect of Outcome 11, Program 11.1: Mental health, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

**Ms Plibersek:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- Budget Measures (Section 1.3) – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- Outcome reporting (Section 2) – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
- Program report (Section 2) – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio
(Question No. 1151)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:
In respect of Outcome 12, programs (a) 12.1 Workforce and rural distribution, and (b) 12.2 Workforce development and innovation, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

Ms Plibersek: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- Budget Measures (Section 1.3) – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- Outcome reporting (Section 2) – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
- Program report (Section 2) – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio
(Question No. 1152)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:
In respect of Outcome 13, programs (a) 13.1 Blood and organ donation services, (b) 13.2 Medical indemnity, and (c) 13.3 Public hospitals and information, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

Ms Plibersek: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:
Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 August 2012:
In respect of Outcome 14, Program 14.1: Health emergency planning and response, for (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14, (iii) 2014-15, and (iv) 2015-16, what is the breakdown of sub-programs, and their respective allocated funding and administrative costs.

Ms Plibersek: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Health and Ageing Portfolio provide information on the agency’s resources and planned performance with details provided of administered and departmental expenditure for each program, as well as the objective. This information is under a number of key headings, including the following:

- Budget Measures (Section 1.3) – highlight new Government decisions taken since the tabling of the last set of appropriations bills. These include measure titles and administered and departmental estimates for the current year, the Budget year and forward years;
- Outcome reporting (Section 2) – includes the Outcome Budgeted Expenses and Resource Statement for each outcome, providing an overview of the total expenses for each outcome by program; and
- Program report (Section 2) – focuses on the objective of each program, its resourcing, the deliverables it produces and the key performance indicators of its progress.

Budget Statements: Health and Ageing Portfolio
(Question No. 1153)