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SITTING DAYS—2014

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FOURTH PERIOD

Governor-General
His Excellency General the Hon. Sir Peter Cosgrove AK, MC (Retd)

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mrs Karen Lesley Andrews MP,
Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP, Mr Alexander George Hawke MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP, Mr Craig Kelly MP, Hon. Charles Christian Porter MP,
Mr Donald James Randall MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Brett David Whiteley MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP
Government Whips—Mr Scott Buchholz MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce MP
Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Deputy Whip—Mr George Robert Christensen MP

Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. William Richard Shorten MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Tanya Joan Plibersek MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP
Opposition Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Ms Joanne Catherine Ryan MP

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<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
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<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
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#### PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;

IND—Independent; NATSWA—The Nationals WA; CLP—Country Liberal Party;

AUS—Katters Australia Party; AG—Australian Greens; PUP—Palmer United Party

#### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing

Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder

Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills

Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
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<td>The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
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CHAMBER
The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 10:00, made an
acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
Parliament House: Security

The SPEAKER (10:01): As members would be aware, there has been significant
discussion in relation to security at Parliament House, following the national terrorism public
alert level being raised from medium to high. As Speaker I am working closely with the
President and intelligence and security agencies to implement necessary security changes here
at Parliament House. Members will notice changes to security practices and procedures in
Parliament House which are designed to enhance and strengthen the existing security
arrangements.

I would ask that members be patient as the new security procedures are implemented and,
whilst every effort will be made to minimise disruption to members, these new measures are
necessary to ensure safety to Parliament House and its occupants.

Screens in the Chamber

The SPEAKER (10:02): Members would be aware that for some time there has been a
desire to place screens in the chamber to show the current item of business and questions
before the chair. Such screens have been located in the Federation Chamber for some time,
and these were always intended as a 'trial' for eventual location of screens in this chamber. A
further request to place screens in the chamber was made to me by the Procedure Committee
earlier this year.

Members will notice that screens have been placed in the corners of the Speaker's end of
the chamber, and they will show the current matter and question before the House which I
believe will be of assistance to the House.

PETITIONS
Responses

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (10:03): Ministerial responses to petitions previously
presented to the House have been received as follows:

Airport Noise

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter dated 26 May 2014, reference 842/1309, regarding a petition submitted to
the Standing Committee on Petitions concerning impacts of aircraft noise on the residents of East
Melbourne.

East Melbourne is located close to the CBD of Melbourne and the number, frequency and diversity
of aircraft result in additional noise as opposed to outlying suburbs.

Airspace above East Melbourne has an upper limit of 1,500 feet, i.e. traffic is unable to operate at a
higher level without specific approval of the Essendon Control Tower. This is to avoid conflict with
overflying traffic.
Aircraft and Helicopters (Aircraft) that operate over this area are reporting on peak time vehicle traffic, and tourism operations. Tourism operations in the area have grown significantly with Melbourne becoming a popular destination for tourists with regular flights operating over the CBD and surrounds. Currently traffic enters and exits the area via the Melbourne Cricket Ground after transiting along the Yarra River.

Air Ambulance Helicopters are also transiting the area to nearby hospitals e.g. the Royal Children's Hospital, the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the Alfred Hospital.

Many of the aircraft that operate over East Melbourne start and/or end their flights at Moorabbin Airport or Essendon Airport. Both of these airports have Fly Neighbourly Agreements in place, which are voluntary agreements between the airport and operators designed to minimise the noise impact of operations.

East Melbourne lies on a direct line between each airport. The Government remains committed to minimising the noise impacts on residents in close proximity to flight paths wherever we can.

Airservices Australia and the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) have met and discussed this matter with residents of East Melbourne and the office of Mr Adam Bandt MP, the Member for Melbourne.

The issue continues to be constantly monitored to ensure all aircraft are operating in a legal and safe manner.

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

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter dated 26 May 2014 (reference 901/1369) regarding a petition received by the Standing Committee on Petitions from the 'Residents of Australia'. I note the petition requests that the budget for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and the National Indigenous Television Channel (NITV) be increased, and that the Australia Network be maintained with control by the ABC. NITV became part of the SBS as of 1 July 2012.

The Australian Government is determined to repair the Federal Budget and build a stronger economy. It is only fair that all government agencies make a contribution to achieving this goal. Accordingly, the 2014-15 Budget includes a modest one per cent saving on the national broadcasters' base funding. This measure does not constitute an ongoing efficiency dividend and the exact implementation of the savings will be determined by the boards and executives of the national broadcasters.

The Government provides a combined total of nearly $1.4 billion per annum to the national broadcasters to deliver broadcasting and digital media services in line with the responsibilities of their respective Charters. All government agencies providing a service to the community have a duty to ensure taxpayers' funds are used as efficiently as possible, and the ABC and SBS are no exception.

To this end, the Government instituted an Efficiency Study to review the national broadcasters' operations, to assist the ABC and SBS boards to meet one of their key legislative duties to ensure that the functions of the organisations are performed efficiently and with the maximum benefit to the people of Australia. Based on the study's findings, the Government is confident that the national broadcasters can improve work practices and operate more efficiently in their day-to-day operations. Critically, the Government expects those efficiencies can be achieved without cutting the national broadcasters' diverse range of programs or affecting their editorial independence.

The study identified a range of areas where significant operational efficiencies or savings could be achieved by the broadcasters. The ABC and SBS have the potential to drive down their operating costs
by adopting new technologies and business practices. Decisions about particular efficiencies are a matter for the ABC and SBS boards.

The Government has provided a working draft of the study to both national broadcasters' boards to assist them in managing their businesses more efficiently and the Government looks forward to working with them over the coming months in achieving this goal.

As part of the 2014-15 Budget released on 13 May 2014, the Australian Government will terminate the Australia Network contract with the ABC. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is responsible for oversight of the management of the Australia Network.

The Government has previously raised concerns about the value for money and the effectiveness of the Australia Network as a public diplomacy tool to promote Australia's interest in the Indo-Pacific region.

Terminating the Australia Network contract will deliver savings to the Government of up to $76.8 million over four years, with further savings over the duration of the contract. The ABC could continue projecting into the region using other resources, such as Radio Australia. The exact nature of these services will be a decision for the ABC Board and Executive. DFAT advises that it considers the network has struggled to achieve core diplomatic objectives. On 1 May 2014, the National Commission of Audit also recommended ceasing the Australia Network.

The Government will deliver high impact, cost effective public diplomacy activities within existing resources and fully utilise our global network to expand its outreach and promote understanding of Australia to overseas audiences. DFAT will work within its existing budget of $4.7 million in 2014-15 to continue to deliver a focused public diplomacy campaign to promote understanding of Australia and its interests to audiences overseas.

The Government understands the significant relationship the national broadcasters have with Australians, and it is committed to a strong, healthy, and resilient public broadcasting sector that efficiently uses taxpayers' money.

Thank you for bringing the petitioners' concerns to my attention. I trust this information is of assistance.

from the Minister for Communications, Mr Turnbull

Northern Australia: Zone allowance

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 27 May 2014 concerning a petition to increase the amount of the zone tax offset. I am responding to you in my capacity as the Acting Assistant Treasurer. I sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to you.

While the base amounts of the zone tax offset are not indexed and have not increased since 1993, I note that the amounts of some of the dependency tax offsets (that an eligible taxpayer may claim as part of their zone tax offset) are indexed to the Consumer Price Index. As a result, the maximum amount of zone tax offset for taxpayers with certain dependants has increased over time.

As you may already be aware, the Government will produce a White Paper on Developing Northern Australia, which is due to be released later this year. As part of this process, the White Paper will look at determining what the right tax policy settings are to create incentives for business to invest, innovate and employ in the north. This will include looking closely at the specific elements of the tax system that impact northern Australia, such as the zone tax offset.

On 10 June 2014, the Government released the Green Paper on Developing Northern Australia. The zone tax offset is mentioned on page 55 of this report in the context of improving the tax system. The Green Paper, along with submissions received, will inform the White Paper on Developing Northern

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

From the Assistant Treasurer, Senator Cormann

Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 June 2014 (926/1393) regarding a petition calling for Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplants (HSCT) to be made available to Australian patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) under the Medicare system.

There are no regulatory barriers to the use of stem cell treatment for MS. Under the Therapeutic Goods (Excluded Goods) Order No. 1 of 2011, stem cells that are collected from a patient by their medical practitioner for treatment on that patient are not regulated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. The decision to use such a treatment therefore is the professional decision of the medical practitioners and the hospitals in which they work.

All medical procedures come with some level of risk and the decision whether or not a patient is a suitable candidate remains within the professional judgement of the medical practitioners involved.

MS Australia issued a statement in March 2014 that HSCT is not a treatment for everybody, and that it is a high-risk treatment that is still deemed unproven by the international research community. The statement says that HSCT is currently only considered by some doctors and hospitals on a case-by-case basis for those who have an early, aggressive form of relapsing MS that is resistant to all other treatments. The statement is available at www.msaustralia.org.au/news.

The Australian Government, through the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) research and clinical trials, assists with building the body of evidence around safety and efficacy of medical treatments and improves the translation of new knowledge into evidence-based public health policy and clinical practice. In 2013, more than $800 million was committed to fund health and medical research.

More specifically, since 2000, the NHMRC has committed over $535 million towards research relating to Stem Cell Therapies with over $18 million committed to Hematopoietic Stem Cell Therapies, and over $59 million to research on MS.

The Australian Government is committed to delivering a safe, effective and efficient health care system that is fiscally sustainable in the longer term. If a medical service is not covered under the Medical Benefits Schedule, an application can be made to the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC). The MSAC is an independent expert committee that provides advice on whether a medical service should be publicly funded based on an assessment of its safety, clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.

Currently, there are no applications before the MSAC relating to HSCT. More information about the MSAC, including details about how to submit an application can be found at www.msac.gov.au.

I trust this information is of assistance to the Standing Committee on Petitions.

from the Minister for Health, Mr Dutton

Victoria: Early Childhood Education Funding

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 14 July 2014 to the Hon. Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Education, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, concerning the petition submitted by 96 families from Green Park Kindergarten regarding federal funding for the National Partnership Agreement for
kindergarten. As the matter raised falls within my portfolio responsibilities as Assistant Minister for Education, your letter was referred to me for response.

I note the concerns raised in the petition regarding the maintenance of Commonwealth Government funding towards the national partnership agreement for Victorian kindergartens.

The Australian Government supports quality child care and early learning and recognises that learning is most effective when it begins at a young age. The Government is committed to a thriving child care and early learning sector that delivers flexible, accessible, and affordable quality education and care.

The National Partnership on Universal Access (the National Partnership), agreed between the previous government and all states and territories in 2013, provides funding until 31 December 2014.

A requirement of the National Partnership is for a review 'to be completed by 30 June 2014 to enable a decision before the end of 2014'. The purpose of the review is to assess the degree to which the agreed objectives, outcomes and outputs of the National Partnership have been achieved.

The review has been finalised and is due to considered at the next Ministerial Education Council meeting on 15 August 2014.

It should be noted that there was no commitment by the previous government to ongoing funding for the National Partnership. While the Government has made provision for funding in the contingency reserve as reported in the 2014-15 Budget documents, any decisions are subject to the findings of the review and subject to negotiation with the states and territories.

The Government is taking a careful approach to the review, taking into account relevant information to determine the best way forward for Australia's children and families. The Government wants to see evidence of what has been achieved, the most efficient service delivery models and whether return on the Government's investment of $1.6 billion over six financial years has been maximised.

The Government will not comment on arrangements beyond 2014 until the findings of the review are analysed and considered by the Education Council. The public release of the review findings is a matter for the Education Council.

The review is one of a number of processes looking at aspects of child care and early learning in Australia throughout 2014. These include the review of the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care and the Productivity Commission inquiry into how the child care and early learning system can be made more flexible, affordable and accessible.

The Productivity Commission's consultation draft report on its inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning was released on 22 July 2014. The Commission will undertake further consultations during August and accept submissions until 5 September. The Commission is scheduled to provide its final report to Government by the end of October 2014.

The Government will consider all the evidence available in determining the best way forward for Australia's children and families.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising their concerns.

from the **Assistant Minister for Education, Ms Ley**

**Early Childhood Education**

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 14 July 2014 to the Hon. Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Education, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, concerning the petition submitted by 1376 Australian citizens, regarding federal funding for kindergartens. As the matter raised falls within my portfolio responsibilities as Assistant Minister for Education, your letter was referred to me for response.
I note the concerns raised in the petition around the uncertainty of funding beyond the conclusion of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access, which terminates on 31 December 2014.

The Australian Government supports quality child care and early learning and recognises that learning is most effective when it begins at a young age. The Government is committed to a thriving child care and early learning sector that delivers flexible, accessible, and affordable quality education and care.

The National Partnership on Universal Access (the National Partnership), agreed between the previous government and all states and territories in 2013, provides funding until 31 December 2014.

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The Government is taking a careful approach to the review, taking into account relevant information to determine the best way forward for Australia’s children and families. The Government wants to see evidence of what has been achieved, the most efficient service delivery models and whether return on the Government’s investment of $1.6 billion over six financial years has been maximised.

The Government will not comment on arrangements beyond 2014 until the findings of the review are analysed and considered by the Education Council. The public release of the review findings is a matter for the Education Council.

The review is one of a number of processes looking at aspects of child care and early learning in Australia throughout 2014. These include, the review of the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care and the Productivity Commission inquiry into how the child care and early learning system can be made more flexible, affordable and accessible.

The Productivity Commission’s consultation draft report on its inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning was released on 22 July 2014. The Commission is undertaking further consultations during August and will accept submission 5 September 2014. The Commission is scheduled to provide its final report to Government by the end of October 2014.

The Government will consider all the evidence available in determining the best way forward for Australia’s children and families.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising their concerns.

from the Assistant Minister for Education, Ms Ley

Age Pension

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 24 June 2014 on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions about the Age Pension.

Thank you for submitting the petition suggesting specific changes to the Age Pension. In the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government announced changes to the Age Pension to take effect from 2017-18 and later, after the end of the current term of Parliament. The changes to the Age Pension are subject to the passage of legislation.
Further details about the Government’s announced changes can be found on the House of Representatives Petitions Committee website.

The Government welcomes feedback from individuals on policy settings, and appreciates the time you have taken to bring these matters to my attention.

The Government needs to balance a range of competing priorities when determining the direction of policy. Input from the public is an important part of this process.

Thank you again for writing.

from the Minister for Social Services, Mr Andrews

PETITIONS

Statements

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (10:04): Madam Speaker, in the Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions’ last statement, he spoke about the broad range of topics that petitions to the House have raised. Today, I would like to focus on a few interesting petitions from history. Some of these petitions greatly affected modern Australia, while others are interesting for different reasons.

While petitioning in Australia goes back to the kings and queens of England, it is an ancient practice that has been found in almost every part of the world. In ancient China, any citizen from the poorest peasant to the most powerful bureaucrat could send their petitions to the Office of Transmission, which, in some cases, would read the terms of these petitions to the emperor himself.

Ancient Greeks used petitions as part of their fledgling democracy. If a prominent citizen of ancient Athens wanted a statue of themselves put in a public place, they had to make the request through a petition, which was then put as a motion in the assembly, before being debated and voted on by the citizens of Athens. Ancient Roman petitioners would often petition the Senate seeking redress for a personal grievance.

One petition of great importance to the development of modern Australia dates back to 1628, and is known as the Petition of Right. Drafted by a committee of the House of Commons, the petition set out liberties which the king could not infringe, by seeking restrictions on imprisonment without cause and the use of martial law. This document is considered a very important English constitutional document, often seen as being equal to the Magna Carta in importance.

The Australian House of Representatives received a very interesting petition in July 1917. The petition requested that it be made illegal to buy an alcoholic drink for a friend. This anti-shouting petition, as it was known, saw such shouting as a ‘danger to the wellbeing of our returned and returning soldiers’. As a result, the petition asked that shouting be banned for the duration of World War I, and an additional 12 months thereafter. Had this request been granted, modern Australia would be a very different place.

Australians have long been active petitioners. In 1880, after Ned Kelly was sentenced to hang, more than 30,000 Melbournians signed a petition requesting a reprieve. In 1891, several determined Victorian women took to the streets of Melbourne to gather nearly 30,000 signatures in support of female suffrage. Not only did this petition play an important role in the achievement of universal suffrage in Australia; it has also been preserved and digitised so that modern Australians can search it to see if their ancestors or relatives signed this petition.
Finally, I would like to mention the Yirrkala Bark Petitions. In August 1963, two petitions from the Yolngu people were presented to the House. These were drawn up on pieces of stringy bark, with traditional Yolngu ochre paintings, and contained a request in the Yolngu language and English. The petitions were about the concerns of the Yolngu people of Yirrkala regarding a recent decision to excise 300 square kilometres of land for mining purposes.

The Yirrkala Bark Petitions led in part to the formation of a select committee on the issue, and this committee ultimately recommended that the Yolngu people be compensated for the livelihoods they had lost when the land was excised, that sacred sites be protected from desecration and that the activities of the mining companies be monitored by a parliamentary committee. The petitions are highly significant and credited with being one of the catalysts for the move towards legal recognition of the rights of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, as well as the Aboriginal land rights movement.

The two copies of this petition are currently on display here at Parliament House, affirming that petitions have played a very important role in our democracy and indeed the development of modern Australia, and that they will continue to do so.

COMMITTEES

Intelligence and Security Committee

Report

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (10:08): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, I present two reports of the committee: Review of administration and expenditure: No. 11 and No. 12—Australian intelligence agencies, and Review of the listing of Boko Haram, Review of the re-listing of the Islamic State.

Reports made parliamentary papers in accordance with standing order 39(e)

Mr TEHAN: The committee is required by the Intelligence Services Act to review the administration and expenditure of the agencies of the Australian intelligence community, and this report covers the financial years 2011-12 and 2012-13.

The committee received comprehensive submissions for both years and conducted private hearings with each of the agencies, the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security and the Australian National Audit Office. I am pleased to report that the committee was satisfied that agencies are currently overseeing their administration and expenditure effectively.

For a number of years now, the committee has monitored the impact of the efficiency dividend and other savings measures on agencies. In this review, the committee sought assurances that each agency continued to have the necessary resources to address and target Australia's national security priorities to the degree necessary to protect Australians against threats to national security.

Madam Speaker, the committee found that the ongoing impact of the efficiency dividend and other savings measures were placing increasing pressure on the AIC agencies. Since 2010, agencies have warned of the potential impact on operational capability. This was reiterated even more strongly in this review with the clear message that any further cuts will lead to capability reductions. For this reason, the committee has recommended that the government review the continued application of the efficiency dividend and other savings measures to the agencies comprising the Australian intelligence community. The committee
considers particular consideration should be given to the cumulative impact of these measures on operational capacity, including optimal staffing levels, and the ongoing ability of agencies to protect Australia's national security.

Turning to the second report, the committee has reviewed the making of regulations to list Boko Haram and relist the Islamic State as terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code. For Boko Haram, this is the first time the group has been listed by the Australian government. The group has launched attacks of increasing violence and sophistication since 2009. In the period from 2011 and 2014, 29 terrorist attacks were claimed by or reliably attributed to Boko Haram. In addition to assassinations of political, military and religious figures, the group has increasingly targeted non-combatants, including attacks on schools, markets, churches, residential areas and bus interchanges, which have killed hundreds of civilians. The group has also turned to kidnapping, including the April 2014 kidnapping of more than 200 girls from a secondary school in Borno State. Listed as a terrorist organisation by the United Nations and other governments, the group is not engaged in any meaningful peace negotiations

Madam Speaker, as I reported in my oral statement to the House on 4 September, the committee fully supports the listing of Boko Haram as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code.

I now turn to IS. Known also as ISIL and ISIS, the Islamic State was relisted as a terrorist organisation by the government on 11 July 2014. In a statement on 29 June 2014, the group had announced:

Accordingly, the "Iraq and Sham" in the name of the Islamic State is henceforth removed from all official deliberations and communications, and the official name is the Islamic State from the date of this declaration.

The committee was informed that the listing reflects the expansion of the group's operating area and its announcement of an Islamic caliphate, but that the leadership, membership and methods of the group have not changed.

Described to the committee as 'one of the world's deadliest and most active terrorist organisations', the Islamic State conducts daily attacks on security forces and civilians. In Iraq, the group aims to destroy public confidence and provoke widespread revolt against the government, as well as undermining efforts to contain the group. In Syria, its targets include the regime of Bashar al-Assad, some armed opposition groups, and Turkish and Kurdish militants.

The committee fully supports the relisting on the basis that the group continues to engage in and advocate terrorist attacks. The committee also maintains the view expressed in an earlier report that the strong links to Australia are a significant additional factor in the proscription of this group. We have heard that there are about 60 Australians fighting in Syria and Iraq, with about another 100 people in Australia believed to be providing active support. The committee therefore does not recommend disallowance of the regulation listing the Islamic State as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code.

Could I take this opportunity to thank all members of the committee for their participation in these two inquiries. I would also like to place on the record the support of the committee secretariat in helping to put these reports together. I commend the reports to the House.
Mr BYRNE (Holt) (10:15): I will be talking around three very comprehensive reports in the space of about five minutes. I would like to start my remarks by commending all the reports to the House, particularly those on the listing or relisting of the particular terrorist organisations. I also commend the committee secretary, Dr Anna Dacre; Julia Searle, the inquiry secretary; and Renee Toy, who was the researcher. I thank my fellow committee members, who worked in a bipartisan way to deliver a bipartisan and impartial report in challenging circumstances.

I specifically want to talk about and amplify the chair's concerns with respect to the relisting of the terrorist organisations and to point out that the reports on the review of the listing of Boko Haram for the first time and the review of the relisting of the Islamic State were conducted under the Criminal Code. I want to talk about Boko Haram briefly. The parliament joint committee has completed its review process for the listing of Boko Haram as a terrorist organisation for the first time in this country and the process for the relisting of the Islamic State as a terrorist organisation. The committee was satisfied, as the chair said, that the correct procedures were followed and the decisions to list Boko Haram and to relist Islamic State as terrorist organisations were appropriately made.

On the history of Boko Haram, it is a Salafist Islamic movement, largely based in Nigeria, where they intend to establish an Islamic state and implement sharia law upon the populace. There are allegations that Boko Haram has ties with both the al-Qaeda affiliate al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb and al-Shabaab. The chair went into the statement of reasons for the listing of Boko Haram, which included the 29 terrorist attacks that were attributed to them between 2011 and 2014. They are also well known in Australia and around the world for the kidnapping of more than 200 girls from a secondary school in Borno state. They have released videos threatening further attacks and have advocated the perpetration of terrorist attacks. They have not engaged in substantive peace negotiations and they have now been listed as a terrorist organisation by the United Nations, Nigeria, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom.

I would also like to comment on the Islamic State, as the chair also made comment on previously. The Islamic State has previously been listed, first in 2005 and then 2007, under a former name. As quoted from the report, the Australian government relisted the group under the name Islamic State on 11 July 2014. The listing as 'Islamic State' does not reflect a change in the leadership, membership or methods of the group but does reflect the expansion of its operating area and the announcement of an Islamic caliphate. The land claimed by the Islamic State extend from Aleppo in Syria to Diyala in Iraq, including Sunni dominated areas of both countries.

There was a very thorough process that we undertook in listing or relisting these organisations. I think it is important to put on the record—particularly given the listing of the Islamic State, as it now likes to call itself, although we do not accept the terrorist nomenclature that it uses to falsely establish its primacy in the region—that the public should be reassured with respect to the listing, particularly given what occurred with the raids conducted by our intelligence and security agencies in the past couple of days.

I would like to put on the record on behalf of the committee our thanks to both the security services and the intelligence services for the work they do. The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security occupies a very unique space in parliamentary and
public life. It is subjected to comprehensive and classified briefings about intelligence agencies. From time to time that does go into operational activity. I can say with some measure of confidence, on behalf of the committee, that the work of the intelligence and security agencies, particularly in addressing the terrorist threat, is strong. The public should be reassured about the work that it is doing to deal with the current threat that it is dealing with. There has been a lot of community concern about what is transpiring in our community as a consequence of the raid. If there is one message I could put to the Australia people, they should be reassured in the quality and the value of our security agencies. They thwarted a terrorist attack on our soil, and I have full confidence in them continuing to do so in the future.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Education, Training and Employment Programs

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (10:20): I move:
(1) notes the importance of supporting young people transition from school into work or further training and preventing them from falling into the trap of unemployment
(2) recognises the important work done in ensuring that students are supported to make the transition through:
(a) the Youth Connections program that has a proven track record in helping young people who have not or are at risk of not completing year 12, transition back into school or further education, training and employment;
(b) the School Business Community Partnership Brokers program which builds partnerships between schools and the wider community including business and charities that help young people achieve year 12 or equivalent qualifications;
(c) National Career Development Strategy services that support vital links between industry, students and training options; and,
(3) is extremely concerned that there is no funding in the budget for these programs past 1 January 2015; and
(4) calls on the Government to immediately reverse its decision to no longer fund these programs past the 2014 calendar year.

Today, I move this motion because this House recognises, or should recognise, the importance of programs like the Youth Connections, the partnership brokers and the national career development service and the impact it has on the lives of young people in our communities—young people who have now been abandoned and betrayed by this Prime Minister and this government. This Prime Minister has let them down significantly. This government has walked away from its responsibility in supporting young people's transition from school to work. This is a government that simply fails to recognise the significant social and economic impact that cutting this critical support will have on Australians in the years to come. Indeed, supporting our students from school to work or further training can be considered the foundation on which the pillars of people's working lives rest in helping young people make the decisions they need to plan their futures. Even if Australia was to have—and we often have—great childhood early learning centres, the best schools, the best TAFES and the best universities, without supporting young people's transition from school into further
study and training to help them to work out what they want do and what their futures hold, this transition will be fraught.

It is critical that young people get support when they are thinking about what awaits them in life after school. They do not necessarily know what they are good at, what appeals to them and which career will best suit them without some assistance and guidance from people and from services that help them work out where they want to go and how they will get there. In government, Labor invested over $700 million in programs like Youth Connections and partnership brokers—programs that support our young people to continue their studies or pursue further study or training for transition into the workplace. These programs actually get results. This is something that the government does not seem to understand. These programs were getting results, with almost 75,000 young people in the 2013 calendar year given a helping hand to Youth Connections. This figure was expected to top 100,000 at the end of the year.

Mr Laming: You defunded them. Why did you stop funding it?

Ms RISHWORTH: We can have members from the government benches whine all they like. They have to face the reality that they cut these programs. They cut these programs that were helping thousands and thousands of young people. Indeed, if we look at the Youth Connections program, it was incredibly successful, with over 80 per cent of young people still in work or education after two years. Nineteen per cent of young people who accessed the service were Indigenous students, 70 per cent of young people who benefited were in regional and remote areas and 40 per cent of young people who benefited were from the lowest socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and this assistance was making a difference. In government, Labor also delivered the partnership brokers program. This was designed to partner schools with the wider community, including business and charities, in actively supporting young people finishing year 12 or equivalent. There was also the national careers development service, which did a number of things and included the very successful jobs guide that I and many people for decades have been relying on to give advice about which courses to do to achieve career aspirations.

Of course, we had the Prime Minister travel to the US and talk about his admiration for a program that helps boost links with schools and businesses. Little did he understand that indeed he was cutting the program that was successfully achieving that in Australia. With Senator Polley I recently visited the National Joblink in Launceston, a Youth Connections provider which will likely be forced to close its doors at the end of the year because of the Prime Minister's cuts. Quite frankly, when speaking to Lisa, the Youth Connections coordinator in Launceston, she simply could not understand why the government would do this.

We get excuses from the government. They have offered measly support now; they have announced measly support for 3,000 students and young people in small pockets of the country. That cannot replace the significant investment to assist 75,000 people. The government need to reconsider this decision. They need to refund Youth Connections, the national partnership and the career service; otherwise young people will be significantly disadvantaged.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): Is the motion seconded?

Ms Owens: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (10:26): I rise to oppose this motion. Yesterday I participated in the City to Bay fun run through my electorate. Many young people also participated. I think I even spotted one or two supporters of the member for Kingston there. As they ran through my electorate they would have noticed the “fixing south roads” signs—$1 billion of Commonwealth funding for young construction workers. That is another example of how we are helping young Australia and helping build Australia. We are positive about the future of Australia, in contrast to members opposite.

Let us go through a bit of the history. In their last budget the previous Labor government funded the program for a single additional year, with all the funding to conclude at the end of this year. My colleagues on this side of the chamber mentioned that during first speeches by members. Let us remember that the previous Labor government did not provide any further funding or budget allocation. They stand here and say, ‘We were committed,’ but they did not provide any funding. It is all about money being in the bank; the revenue stream being there. They did not provide the funding. They were not committed to it going forward past this year.

We all know that this program was designed by state and territory governments to take over at the end of the national partnerships. The states and territories have declined to do this for a variety of reasons. I know that in my state of South Australia the state Labor government have mismanaged the finances, with over $2 million interest payments on debt. They have no capacity to fund programs like this. They are forced to make cuts to TAFE and other valuable community services. The government will ensure that in the next round to commence next year Job Services Australia will effectively address the needs of young Australians seeking work.

So what else is this government doing? I will go through a few points. We are investing a record $64.5 billion in government and non-government schools for education for young people. We have introduced trade support loans, offering loans of up to $20,000 over the life of an apprenticeship. We are supporting more than 80,000 new students each year for higher education diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degree courses. New work for the dole arrangements will also help more young job seekers improve their chances of getting a job while giving something back to the community. Also, there was a recent announcement that $38 million is being provided to deliver the Training for Employment Scholarship Program.

I was down with Luke Hartsuyker in Drakes Supermarkets, which is a fine local example of providing training and jobs for young Australians. The fine member for Reid knows Roger, who is a fine managing director of that company. I met with a number of impressive young staff members. I congratulate Drakes on their training program and commitment to providing jobs for young Australians. They have put through over 200 staff in recent years to gain certificates in food processing or retail management. They have won numerous awards including, in 2012, employer of the year at the Australian Training Awards. So well done to all those associated with Drake food markets.

I just want to make a few points about the higher education system and the necessary reforms that this government is tackling. These reforms will put Australia in a better position to create some of the best universities in the world, better institutions for young Australians.
In the past, we have attracted some of the best and brightest from Asia, who have gone on to have outstanding careers. I will just go through a couple. One is His Excellency Dr Tan, who studied a PhD in mathematics at my alma mater, the University of Adelaide, and is currently the President of the Republic of Singapore. An earlier Adelaide university graduate was also a previous President of the Republic of Singapore. Like Adelaide university, Flinders, Uni of SA and numerous other universities around Australia have produced many fine graduates from Asia, but this will be in jeopardy unless we improve and give our universities the best chance to succeed with these reforms.

It is not only we who are talking about these reforms. The peak body of the universities sector, Universities Australia, is saying it is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape a higher education system that is sustainable, affordable and equitable—important words: 'sustainable, affordable and equitable'—for students and the nation. Dr Gonski recently backed our plans, claiming deregulation will free up funds to make universities even greater.

Funding for higher education is actually going up—something that the members opposite will not acknowledge. We are providing direct financial support, uncapped, for students. Also, we have a package for low-socioeconomic status students which will give them new Commonwealth scholarships, an innovative program. So there is record investment in education, new initiatives supporting students in training and necessary higher education reforms backed by the universities themselves.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (10:31): I was recently happy to welcome the Leader of the Opposition to the Chifley electorate to visit a massive development venture that is under construction there: the Sydney Business Park at Marsden Park. It is going to create hundreds of thousands of jobs, in particular through a partnership initiated by the developers, joined by a range of community based organisations. The future tenants of the site are going to commit to sourcing the majority of staff from neighbouring suburbs. They are looking to do what they can to deal with the number of unemployed youth in the area, because youth unemployment has plagued our area for quite some time. It is running at roughly three times the national unemployment rate and it is predicted to climb to four times that rate within the next few years. So we need a range of people in business, government and the community to work together to make sure we create jobs and get our local young people ready and skilled up to fill those jobs.

That brings me back to the opposition leader's visit, where he was able to meet the developers and meet on-site with some of the local young people who are already busy working to get a future in the hospitality industry. Courtesy of Marist Youth Care, this band of future entrepreneurs and pretty sharp baristas are running their own cafe in a demountable adjacent to all the site's construction activity. They are the first wave of what will hopefully be many to follow, showing what they are capable if given the chance and boosted by the right support provided by Youth Connections, which is used on-site. That project is just one of many that Marist Youth Care is involved in in the Chifley electorate, giving young people in the area hope of employment and boosting their self-worth.

The following day I visited another organisation, Eagles RAPs in Doonside—a fantastic group of dedicated people who, incidentally, also source Youth Connections funding through Marist Youth Care's grant. Eagles RAPs offers an education platform to young people who
have had problems adapting to traditional schooling or who are battling their own personal circumstances such as misdemeanours or a difficult family life.

Now an organisation that delivers hope to others is running out of hope for itself, because the Abbott government has cut $800,000 of Youth Connections grant funding to Marist Youth Care, which also uses Eagles RAPs. In fact, Eagles RAPs is staring closure in the face after 20 years of operation. The area that I am proud to represent does not hold a monopoly on youth unemployment, crime or hard luck stories—not by any stretch—but we do have more than our fair share, and organisations like Marist Youth Care and Eagles RAPs give greater value for money than the funds they secure from the government. But the Abbott government thinks it is clever to slash their funding and tear away at the sections of society that need help the most, as evidenced in the bold letters contained within the budget.

What I found particularly galling was that, the very day after the opposition leader and I met with Marist Youth Care on-site, the Prime Minister turned up in our area, in Blacktown, and had the hide to meet Marist Youth Care, the very organisation that he stripped $800,000 from. The parliamentary secretary was in tow with him, visiting Marist Youth Care in Blacktown. I felt for them, because they were obviously aggrieved. They are impacted on; they are trying to find jobs and skill people up in our area, and the Abbott government has basically cut their funding, but then the Prime Minister wants to use them as a prop for a photo opportunity. Marist Youth Care is good enough for the Prime Minister to use for a photo op but not good enough to support with the funding they need to help reduce youth unemployment in the area I represent. It is an absolute crime. And does it make sense? No, it does not. But in a way that is not surprising. Let us look at the ministry list. This is how many people from Western Sydney sit in the federal ministry, in an area of two million people: one. And this here is how many sit on the list from the east of Sydney, highlighted in orange: one.

That is my issue. This government has no concept of the impact of its decisions. It cuts school funding, makes it harder for our young to go to university, and has slashed programs like Youth Connections. And the impact of these cuts and the human stories is out of sight and out of mind for a ministry that is Eastern Sydney centric, with the exception of Senator Payne—Senator Payne is the only Western Sydney minister. And guess what? She is the Minister for Human Services, who oversees Centrelink—the same government body that will shortly be holding back Newstart payments to the young people who find it harder to get work because programs like Youth Connections get cut. That tells you everything you need to know about this government: if it is out of sight it is out of mind. They do not care for the young people of Western Sydney and the problems they have, because none of their ministers have to walk around the communities that are affected by their decisions, unless of course it is the Prime Minister and his parliamentary secretaries all out there for a cheap photo.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (10:36): I was very pleased to hear that the member for Kingston was recently in Tasmania. Unfortunately, at the forum she attended when she was down there they could not find one of their own Tasmanian senators to actually represent and speak on behalf of the very important reforms the government is making with respect to higher education. But the member for Kingston is not the only member who has ventured down to Tasmania in more recent times. We had the member for Adelaide in my electorate only a month ago. For the first time in years and years and years, Lyons is back on the radar of the Labor Party. They took it for granted for 20 years. So I am very pleased. I welcome
members of the Labor Party and the shadow ministry who want to come down to Tasmania and spruik what it is. We also had the member for Ballarat in my electorate, and the Leader of the Opposition more recently in Braddon. It is great to see the Labor Party, after ignoring my state for so long, and after the damage done with the Labor Party and the Greens in power both in Tasmania and in Canberra. We are slowly starting to rebuild. You are most welcome to come down any time and have a look at the good work being done by the new Tasmanian government.

All complaint and no solution: if it was so good, it would have been funded. In 2013-14, the budget was brought down not by the Liberal Party but by the Labor Party—an absolute disgrace. Getting children into work and education should be and always is a priority of government, and it should also be a priority of the community. They need to have the best opportunities to secure a job, to go onto higher education. But there is not one simple fix, and to suggest so is quite simply misleading.

The Abbott coalition government is providing more opportunities for young Australians to earn and/or learn, and it is my true belief that this starts with the family. It is about the culture that is embedded within the family unit. It is about the example that mums and dads set for their children. Yes, of course schools have a role to play. The community mentors have a role to play. And the conversations and the culture need to be there—not in year nine or year 10, but they need to begin in year five or year six, and this needs to be embedded into the curriculum. I will give the example in my own electorate of the Glenora District High School. The principal, Phillip Wells, is a fine educator and takes great pride in getting, for the first time ever in a regional or rural school, all of last year’s year 10 students to go on to year 11. Some of you may not realise, but in Tasmania, unfortunately, we do not have year 11 and year 12 in the high schools. That is being changed by the current state government, and they have introduced a voluntary system whereby schools can apply to become part of a program to reintroduce year 11 and year 12.

Phillip Wells, the principal at Glenora district school, got all of the students from year 10 to go on to college last year, and three-quarters of the way through 2014 they are still there. Full marks to him, because this was a program that started at the district school in year 5 and year 6. He is working to encourage these kids to understand the opportunities that are there. Some of these kids come from very poor backgrounds, very low SES backgrounds. With no disrespect to mum and dad, they just do not know the opportunities that are there in the big wide world and the opportunities that a good education can give to those children. As many would be aware, there are a number of schools in my electorate—Cressy district school, New Norfolk High School, Campbell Town district school and Sorell High School—that participate in the Beacon Foundation, which does wonderful work.

The things that we are doing as a government include the trade support loans that are about encouraging students to complete their apprenticeship: "Complete your apprenticeship and we'll knock 20 per cent off the loan that you take out." Whether it be $5,000, for example, for a utility vehicle or accommodation assistance, it is about encouraging those students to complete their education.

As a former speaker mentioned, in relation to the higher education reforms, it is about 80,000 more young Australians from low SES backgrounds having an opportunity to go on to
higher education, having an opportunity to do sub-bachelor and bachelor and diploma courses at university. That is truly a reform.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (10:41): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Kingston. I was very interested to hear the previous speaker talk about the Labor Party as being "all complaint and no solution", particularly having regard to the contributions that we have already heard from government members opposite. "All complaint and no solution" is really an allegation that could be more fairly addressed at members of this government—a government that is so narrowly ideological, as demonstrated by the previous speaker's contribution, and that is focused on the family, ignoring the deep social needs of many vulnerable young people and ignoring a positive role of government and the responsibilities of government particularly in this area.

I have spoken on this topic previously. It is a great shame, a tragedy indeed, that this government has seen fit to progress with its cruel and destructive agenda by attacking vulnerable young people—attacking our future. Youth unemployment is, of course, a pervasive problem right across the country. It can have a lasting impact on a person's life.

It is not uncommon for entry level jobs now to be advertised that require minimum amounts of experience, which makes it particularly difficult for an inexperienced young person to secure employment and a start in their working life. As well as this experience gap there is also an information gap whereby young people tend not to have the connections or the networks to know if there are jobs going.

In government, Labor sought to bridge both the information gap and the experience gap between young people and employers with programs like Youth Connections and Partnership Brokers. We invested more than $700 million over five years. Youth Connections helps young people who have not completed or are at risk of not completing year 12 or equivalent qualifications and have barriers that make it difficult to participate in education, training or employment. Youth Connections providers work with young people to help make a successful transition to further education, training or employment.

Before the budget—before this horror budget—I met with some of the local service providers in the Scullin electorate like Kildonan, Whittlesea Community Connections and Crossroads to discuss the program and its importance to our area. I was impressed not just with the passionate and committed staff but also with the results the program is delivering on the ground. Six months after exiting Youth Connections, 94 per cent of young people are still engaged in education and employment. And after two years, more than 80 per cent are still in work or education. This is a significant achievement, particularly in the context of the rising youth unemployment rates. It shows that these programs are working.

But it is about more than statistics. I was, and I remain, deeply affected by the stories I heard of the individual impacts of the program. I think especially of a young woman from Iran, at risk of disengagement two years ago, or thereabouts, now on track to become an architect—a life transformed through these positive, vital interventions. I would like to think that all of us in this place would want to do everything we can to reduce youth unemployment. Getting and keeping a job is one of the most important things a person can do. It builds confidence, independence and a sense of pride and accomplishment, as well as providing food on the table and shelter over our heads. Thanks to this government, funding
for these vital programs runs out from the end of 2014, and many providers will be forced to close.

I note that two weeks ago, in what can only be seen as an admission that the government has made a mistake, it introduced some stop-gap measures. However, these announcements will achieve nothing like Labor's programs. I also note that they are targeted at regional youth. I certainly support reducing youth unemployment in regional areas, but what about young people in metropolitan areas like Scullin, Kingston, Parramatta and Reid? Why doesn't the government care about these people? The youth unemployment rate in Melbourne's north-east was almost 12 per cent a year ago, but as of August this year it has risen to 14 per cent. Just $130 million was needed to maintain these programs and, if the funding was maintained, 100,000 young Australians would benefit—a small investment for a big return in our future.

With youth unemployment today at more than double the average unemployment rate, Australia needs a plan for job creation which must involve preventing youth unemployment and supporting at-risk young people. Of course, there is no plan at all in terms of jobs from members opposite. I say this to members opposite—the members in our present government: reducing unemployment should not be seen as budget savings. It should not be seen as a burden. It is an investment in our young people. It is an investment in our capacity and our collective wellbeing. I see the parliamentary secretary at the table sigh. I think it is symptomatic of this government's failure to engage with the real concerns of vulnerable young people in electorates like mine. Unfortunately, it is the case that we have a government that is not concerned about youth unemployment or about the future of this country. All the rhetoric about intergenerational inequality is empty. It is just a mask for ideologically-driven austerity, for a small, narrow view of the state and our collective capacity. I am pleased to join the member for Kingston and Labor members in calling on this government to immediately reverse its decision to no longer fund these programs beyond this calendar year.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10:46): Those opposite never fail when it comes to post-election amnesia. Here they are up in arms about Youth Connections Program, yet while they were in government Labor did not provide any further funding or budget allocation for the program to continue beyond this year. That is right: Labor is responsible for the defunding of this program. Close to my electorate of Ryan, BoysTown has announced that they are looking at filling the gap left by Youth Connections. They are looking at privately funding a program with similar goals to Youth Connections. This is just one private organisation looking to fill the gap. Just because the government does not fund a program, it does not mean that it cannot happen. I would like to commend BoysTown for its initiative. Despite Youth Connections, I would also like to point out that youth unemployment continued to rise under Labor. The coalition government is delivering on our commitment to introduce Trade Support Loans for apprentices to encourage more young people to take up a trade and complete their qualification. From 1 July 2014, the government will offer loans of up to $20,000 over the life of an apprenticeship. These loans will ease the financial burden and help increase apprenticeship completion rates. Like HELP, formerly referred to as HECS, the loans will be repayable only once apprentices are earning a sustainable income.

We are also giving young Australians a greater chance to go on to further education, whether it be through a trade, a sub-bachelor degree or a bachelor degree. As part of the coalition's government's largest education reforms in 30 years, the Commonwealth will
provide funding for higher education diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees, providing pathways to careers or further study. These initiatives are all about ensuring that young people are given the opportunity to become educated and broaden their career prospects. For those young people currently in between jobs, the new work-for-the-dole arrangements will help more young job seekers to improve their chances of getting a job while giving something back to the community that supports them. This will also keep them active so that when they do get back into the workforce they remain in the mind frame to cope with normal work hours and mental demand.

The coalition government understands that a highly skilled workforce is crucial to Australia's productivity and global competitiveness. Apprenticeship completion rates of around 50 per cent are not good enough, and the new support services announced by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Industry will provide more support to apprentices and employers throughout their years of training. New arrangements will shift the focus from administration to integrated client-centred support, including job matching of potential apprentices and employers; the provision of advice about different training options; personalised mentoring for apprentices identified as needing extra support; guidance to businesses about taking on an apprentice; managing the administration of an apprenticeship, including the training contract; and administering apprenticeship payments and employer incentives.

The coalition believes that the most important difference from Labor's apprenticeship model is that, for both businesses and potential apprentices, the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network will be a one-stop shop, so someone can still go find a chippie and say, 'Are you looking for an apprentice?' but now they can also go to the $200 million a year Australian Apprenticeship Support Network. That network will say: 'I know of a carpenter who's looking for an apprentice. I'll match you up. I'll sign you up. I'll make sure that they look after you, and I will manage you and manage any problems that you have during the process.' It is a one-stop shop. The outcome of this is that the person is more likely to complete their training and stay in a job over the long term.

Up until now, apprenticeship centres have not been able to go out and place people in jobs. This will change. The government will actually pay them not only for placing people in apprenticeships but also for keeping them in training so that the apprentice has someone there helping them, mentoring them, looking after all their paperwork, giving them information about a trade support loan, doing all the things that young people need to make sure they finish their apprenticeship.

It is clear that only the coalition has a cross-industry, national approach to reducing youth unemployment, to securing Australia's global competitiveness and to helping create a strong economy.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (10:51): I thank the shadow minister and member for Kingston for bringing this important matter before us. I think the challenge after they finish school is to try to help young people into employment. There are limited opportunities in many areas. The area that I represent is one of those. It is a very multicultural area, as everyone knows, but it is also an area of significant disadvantage. Regrettably, my area has about a 15 per cent unemployment rate for those between the ages of 15 and 24. These are things that become very important to us on the ground looking at the interest of
young people. Therefore, looking at work beyond school becomes critical—and, by the way, is a partnership. It should involve all of us from school, from government agencies and from local business. Everyone has a vested interest in trying to find opportunities for our young people, so this is something we should be doing and working together on.

For this government to turn around and cut almost $2 billion from skills and training and have further cuts projected for the university sector through deregulation—I do not know what has happened in the other states, but in New South Wales I get to see on a pretty regular basis the impact of the cuts the New South Wales Liberal government is making to TAFE—it is little wonder why it is a challenge to get young people into employment. I do not think you need to be a Rhodes scholar to work it out. For young people to find employment opportunities, you must invest in education, and yet what I see is this government doing the exact opposite. The current economic climate would dictate that, with rising unemployment, we invest more, not less in education.

I would like to talk about one organisation in my electorate in south-west Sydney called South West Connect. It specialises in assisting young people transitioning from school into employment. South West Connect, which operates in the Liverpool and Fairfield areas, has positively impacted on the lives of about 7½ thousand young people through 48 partnerships with local business and community groups. The Try a Trade program—or, as it is now called, Seek a Skill—has allowed hundreds of young people of school age to come in and test their skills, basically road testing a possible occupation for their future. This is something that should be encouraged not just in my electorate but across all electorates, particularly in areas experiencing high youth unemployment. The success of these programs is phenomenal.

The two main functions of South West Connect are Partnership Brokers and Youth Connections. Something I would like to talk about in relation to those programs is the Miller Auto Shed, where 180 students, over a period of time, were able to work side by side with various tradesmen. They built up a racing car—or a drag car, at least—and raced it at Eastern Creek. This is something that in my electorate is very important, and I suppose many electorates find this with young males. They wanted to get involved in developing fast cars, as I used to do in my youth. But they actually got hands-on experience in building up a racing car, which I understand—not that I have seen it race—is quite competitive. Of that group who went through, 15 went on to get direct apprenticeships in the industry, whilst another 50 of the students are now working successfully in full-time occupations. So, this changed the position for those children who were at risk. But the important part about it is that they did not leave school at age 15. To get involved in this project and to stay involved in this project they had to commit to stay to year 12, and they did. That is something that changes lives.

Another project I would like to talk a little bit about is the alternative education model partnership. Again, it is facilitated through Job Services Australia and through various providers and local community organisations to help young people engage throughout their secondary education and basically help kids stay at school. These things are changing lives. They do not warrant a $2 million slash and burn by this government if this government is to be serious about youth unemployment.

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (10:56): I welcome the opportunity to discuss an extremely important policy area and to also discuss how the Abbott government is supporting Australia’s youth in their transition into the workforce. The motion rightly raises the importance of
getting young people to transition from school—like those who are just leaving the gallery at the moment—into either further education or the workforce. In fact, this government is a great supporter of this transition and has shown through its announcements and policies that we unequivocally recognise the importance of getting young Australians earning or learning. Unfortunately, like so many of the former government's policies, their policies in this area were announced with so much fanfare and were left without the budget for them to continue. In fact, it is a perfect example of why the coalition was elected in 2013 to fix Labor's horrendous record with Australia's budget. Both Youth Connections and Partnership Brokers had no funding beyond 31 December 2014 and on top of that the career development resources had no funding beyond the 2014-15 budget.

Of course, this is just one of many examples, but if those opposite want to continue to put forward motions that demonstrate the hopeless record of their previous government, I will be happy to continue speaking to those motions. But that is not the only thing this motion demonstrates. It shows the dishonesty and hypocrisy of the opposition, and not only with these programs not funded by the previous government. In any case, the Youth Connections program was designed to be taken over by state and territory governments at the end of the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions. Similarly, the Partnership Brokers program was designed to have finite funding, with the ultimate goal for the partnership to become self-sustaining—a good idea. For the opposition to now be using these policies as a political tool is opportunism and hypocrisy at its worst.

Separate to the National Partnership Agreement in 2013, there were 72 transition programs funded by state and territory governments that were aimed at improving school attendance and transitioning from school to work. Now, rather than the federal government deeply involving itself in policy areas of the states and territories, this government is focusing on assisting where it will be most effective, and that is by fixing the debt and deficit disaster left behind by the previous government. Our policies are driven at creating economic growth, which will create more jobs for young Australians—especially young Australians. Unlike most of those opposite, I can actually speak from experience when it comes to discussing employment. I spent the majority of my working life on the front lines of Australia's small and family business sector. I can safely assure the member for Kingston and her colleagues that, whilst the government of the day can introduce whatever programs it wants, if business cannot afford to employ people the jobs simply will not be there. I say that again: if business cannot afford to employ people, the jobs simply will not be there.

This government recognises the importance of young people's access to employment opportunities. That is why our policies are directed at increasing economic growth to ensure increasing job opportunities. As we on this side of the House often point out, the government does not create jobs—business does. The best thing government can do to help young Australians find work is to get out of the way of business, cut red tape and get this country's budget back on track. Of course this does not mean that the Commonwealth should step away from supporting young Australians who are looking to find work or further education—far from it. The government's 2014-15 budget is providing funding for a range of initiatives designed to assist young Australians with finding employment—especially following their schooling as they transition to higher education or the workforce. To begin with, the government is investing a record $64.5 billion in government and nongovernment schools.
The government has introduced new trade support loans from 1 July 2014. These loans will ease the financial burden on apprenticeships and help increase apprenticeship completion rates. The government has also extended HELP for students studying higher education diploma, advanced diploma and associate degree courses. This will provide pathways for more students to their chosen career.

For those who are unable to find work, the new work for the dole arrangements will help young job seekers as they transition because it will improve their chances. Most importantly, all of these programs are budgeted for, so those who stand to benefit from them can plan their futures. This government will not leave young Australians guessing about the support they receive from the Commonwealth government—unlike the last government.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (11:01): I have listened with interest to members on the government benches talking about what young people need, I presume in their electorates because their perceptions of what young people need are quite different from those that I have, having spent so much time in my own community. I understand, as members opposite do, that there are people who have started an apprenticeship and need assistance, need support, to continue. I understand that the government is providing $20,000 loans to help them do that. That is one way that the government has chosen to help young people who are already on a path towards work. They have talked about parenting—how you leave it to parents; parents know how to do it. Some parents do, but there are many others who do not and there are young people in my community in families affected by violence or alcohol or just bad parenting who have lost their way. They are not heading towards apprenticeships, they are not heading to work and they are certainly not heading university—they are on a path to nowhere. They are young people who have lost their way, who are getting in trouble, and many are heading towards homelessness or are already homeless. None of the programs that government members have spoken about—such as moving from school to work programs—apply to them. They are not in school. Good parenting? They do not have it. Assistance in finishing apprenticeships? They are nowhere near an apprenticeship. Assistance in getting into university? They are nowhere near university. These young people are lost and they have no-one to help them find a path back to a good life. They are also on a path to an extremely expensive life for the taxpayer if they end up in crime or are unemployed for long periods.

It is sensible for governments to involve themselves in finding ways for these young people to find a path back to contributing to society and living good lives. One of the ways the Labor government found was Youth Connections. Youth Connections is incredibly cost-effective. In my community, the cost is about $700,000 a year for Youth Connections through Parramatta, Campbelltown, Bankstown, St George and Liverpool-Fairfield. It is incredibly effective. It assists up to 200 kids—in fact, it is now 215 children—even though it is only funded for 195. It finds young people who have lost their way, and it is voluntary for those young people to get involved in those programs. Sometimes those young people are involved for up to two years. The success rate of Youth Connections is extraordinary. Two years after these young people have found their way into Youth Connections and gone through the program and left, 80 per cent of them are still either studying or in work. These young people are the most vulnerable, most at risk, group in our community and 80 per cent of them are still in work or study two years after they have left the program. That is an extraordinary achievement. I
worked it out once based on the entire number—it is about $3,500 per young person. If you only look at the success rate it is a bit more than that, but it is incredibly cost-effective if you are talking about getting young people who are heading towards lives of homelessness and substantial periods of unemployment or crime back onto a path where they contribute to society.

We have heard some extraordinary statements from government members. The member for Lyons said it was the Labor Party that brought down the 2014-15 budget. We are not taking credit for that dud; we are not taking credit for the 2014-15 budget. There is no doubt that what was in the 2014-15 budget was a product of the government—it was the government's budget, not the opposition's budget, and it did not include funding to continue the partnership which had been in place up until the end of 2014. I have no doubt the next speaker will try to make the same point, so I will make this clear. Partnership agreements between state and federal governments are negotiated for a number of years and then towards the end of those partnership agreements they are renegotiated. During the renegotiation phase, because you do not really want to play your hand and you do not want to go out there and say what the figures are, the figures do not have their own budget line for the period beyond the agreement. This is for obvious reasons—it is very similar to a commercial arrangement; you would not suddenly stick 'this is what we are offering you' up in front. You just do not do that. You hold those figures back. There are things, by the way, that are not in the government's budget. Paid parental leave, for example, does not have its own line in the budget but no-one is suggesting that the government has not included it in the budget. (Time expired)

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (11:06): There are those moments in politics when you ask: what are we doing here? There are those moments when you hope that, before you bring forward a motion, staff in your political office would gather around you and say: 'Don't go there. Don't go and start a debate with the coalition government about a program that you defunded yourself.' But, in fact, no-one gathered around the member for Kingston. No-one gave her that quiet word in the ear that would have made an enormous difference. You remember that sort of eternal silence when the motion finally makes it up to the notice board in the whip's office and nobody wants to speak to it? It is all right; it sits there empty for weeks, and everyone says, 'Don't go there.' Unfortunately, the member for Kingston was not protected by her staff, by her constituents or by those who knew better—and this motion came to parliament today. That is right: the Labor Party is attacking the now coalition government about why we will not rescue, revive and resuscitate a program that they defunded, a program that they cared so little about that in 2012 they only flicked in an extra year of funding—like walking past a beggar and flicking a coin into their bowl. And then come 2013 how committed were they to put it into the forward estimates? It was another one year of funding, with the money running out in December this year. This is the measure of how keen the opposition is in Youth Connections and partnership funding. It is a big fat zero.

If those opposite had really genuinely cared when they were in government then there would be, as we have said consistently on this side of the chamber, evidence out in the forward estimates—governments think in four-year lots; four years ahead—giving four years of security, certainty and tenure for the people delivering these vital services. There are 450 of them all around this great nation, and 83 programs. But, no, that is not how Labor operate. How Labor operate is that they give a year of extended funding. Of course, you are secure in
your job for a year. What sort of security and certainty is that? How can you plan for a family when your funding just trickles in once a year and then in the middle of every year you are wondering: 'Could this be it? Will the guillotine fall?'

There was no certainty at all given by that Labor government to this program—no passion, no support whatsoever—yet they happen to dig it up now. It reminds me a little bit of my time at a hospital, working in critical care. These government programs are like a patient that we have to continue to support, to keep alive and thriving. We want to make sure that they go on to deliver great things. But what the former Labor government did, as one emergency team handed over to the other, was pull the plug out of the wall, didn't they? They switched off the life support system on Youth Connections, didn't they? And then they snuck out of the building hoping no-one would notice and then they brought this motion in today to criticise the coalition government for not fixing the problem that they created. That's right—they were there on Youth Connections, where they were meant to be, looking after the patient, and they were pulling out the IV drip, switching off the fluid, stopping the blood, booby-trapping the bed and even booking the undertaker! That is what this Labor opposition did and now they have the hide to come in here and move this motion!

Of course, no-one wanted to speak to this motion on the Labor side. No-one wanted to back that member for Kingston, so we got the nicest people in politics—the member for Reid and the member for Scullion, who are good, kind, well-intentioned people—to come in here and speak on a motion for which they could otherwise find no-one at all to back that member for Kingston. You are good people for coming in here but you have no defence to the basic prime facie case that this program was killed off in 2012, when the Labor government was scurrying around trying to fool voters that they could get back to surplus. The best way to get back to surplus is to hide stuff in the forward estimates.

I could elaborate on the great stuff that we are doing in training for employment partnerships, the money that is being invested in trade support loans and in basically promoting employers and schools to work together to create the opportunities that we need in the middle. I have often wondered why we need enormous amounts of investment there. SEEK.com has shown us that by providing opportunities rational individuals can go out and find the opportunities they need most. Now there are a small number of individuals for whom that is not possible. They come from tough family circumstances, with very little guidance and leadership from care givers. They live in tough parts of this country, with parents who are often struggling with mental illness or in and out of incarceration. What we need for those people is properly directed welfare. We need to make sure that that is spent purely on health, education, housing and essential needs. There should also be reciprocal and mutual obligation that they turn up to programs like this, if they want to receive their welfare payment. Of course, no movement was made in that direction by the former Labor government.

They are a Labor opposition now but when in government they simply measured themselves on how many inputs they made, how much money they could give way. Forget the outcome! It was just about creating more public servants. They never saw a public service job they could not duplicate. They never saw a public service job they could not give to a whole team of them. They were a government that lost their way and this member for Kingston is exactly why we got rid of the Labor government in 2013—and they can stay away for as long as possible!
Iraq and Syria

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (11:12): I move:

That this House:

(1) welcomes the Australian Government’s commitment to contributing to humanitarian aid in Iraq, including through airdrops;

(2) commends the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection for:

(a) their commitment to working with our allies towards a solution, including having reaffirmed the strong state of our bilateral defence and security co-operation with the United States;

(b) strengthening our national security by providing a further $630 million over four years to boost the counter terrorism capacity of our security and intelligence organisations;

(c) their commitment to prosecuting those Australians who engage in terrorism-related activities and to strengthening our ability to monitor, arrest, and prosecute people who have been involved with terrorist groups abroad; and

(d) setting aside a minimum of 4,400 resettlement places in the 2014-15 Refugee and Humanitarian Program for ethnic and religious minorities fleeing the humanitarian crises in Iraq and Syria;

(3) recognises that:

(a) Christian Assyrians, Chaldeans, Yazidis, and Mandaeans are minority religious and racial groups in Iraq, and are subject to ongoing violence, intimidation, harassment and discrimination on religious and ethnic grounds;

(b) hundreds of thousands of Christian Assyrians, Chaldeans, Yazidis, and Mandaeans have been forced to flee their homes in northern Iraq; and

(c) a growing number of Australians are travelling to Iraq and Syria and other conflict zones where their aim is to do harm and bring back deadly skills to Australia, and the threat from these extremists is real and growing;

(4) condemns the violent and barbaric killing, intimidation, harassment and discrimination of Christian Assyrians, Chaldeans, Yazidis, and Mandaeans in Iraq at the hands of the terrorist organisation, Islamic State (also known as ISIS); and

(5) calls upon the Australian Government to:

(a) continue to focus on the humanitarian aid mission; and

(b) work closely with our allies to ensure that more people are not exposed to the brutal zealotry of the Islamic State.

This motion calls upon the Australian parliament to do two things: to continue to focus on the humanitarian aid mission in Iraq and to work closely with our allies to ensure that more people are not exposed to the brutal zealotry of the Islamic State. In moving this motion, I note that events have moved rapidly in the past few weeks and we have seen the government put forward a strong series of responses for what has been occurring. We have also seen support from large segments of the opposition. We of course welcome the Leader of the Opposition and those people in the Labor Party who support the government in its strong response to this very important issue.
Like all Australians, I have been appalled and shocked at what has been going on in Iraq. Many of us here have been talking about the minority groups, and this motion canvasses most of those minority groups who have been affected by the brutal zealotry of Islamic State. We have seen beheadings of journalists but also of local Islamic people, Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and Westerners—all sorts of people. This is indiscriminate killing by a great evil of people in Iraq and Syria. We have also seen those Christian groups—whether they be Assyrians, members of the Assyrian Church of the East, or the Chaldeans, the members of the Eastern Catholic Church who share common and ethnic heritage distant and apart from their Arabic neighbours in Iraq—particularly targeted by IS and their evil zealotry, and they have been forced to flee in large numbers. We have seen that there are about 1.4 million Chaldeans and Assyrians in Iraq. Their population has decreased in recent years to about 500,000, with over a decade of turmoil—this latest incident being the straw that broke the camel's back. We have seen over 60 churches bombed, the Chaldean Catholic Archbishop kidnapped and murdered and other hideous atrocities against people's right to live freely and to practice their religion freely. The Yezidis, a small and ancient group of Persian faith, founded by a philosopher, are being hounded and hunted down by Islamic State, and they have greatly suffered as well. We have seen the results of the fleeing of all of these thousands of people to Mount Sinjar. They had been surrounded for many days and had to be relieved by American and Australian forces.

I note that in particular the government has assisted with humanitarian aid by sending RAAF C130J Hercules aircraft to deliver pallets of badly needed food and supplies, as well as $5 million worth of humanitarian aid provided to Iraq. I think all Australians welcome this humanitarian aid to people in very disastrous and dire circumstances, fleeing a great evil. The cargo included 150 boxes of high-energy biscuits and bottled water. It was enough to sustain thousands of people for 24 hours. We welcome all of these practical outcomes of Australian aid and assistance, which is directly saving lives and preventing great evil atrocities from occurring. I want to particularly thank the Hercules crews and members of the RAAF who are providing the humanitarian aid and assistance. They are doing a great job providing support for the people fleeing from terror.

I also acknowledge the Turkmen and the Shabak. There are so many groups and minorities. The nature of ISIS and the Islamic State is that they do not discriminate. They kill everybody who is not one of them, regardless of their background and religion.

We have seen all of these minorities persecuted: the Shabak, near Mosul and the Nineveh Plains, and the Mandaeans, who began fleeing Iraq under Saddam's rule. Their population has decreased to just a small group of 5,000. I was privileged to meet with the Mandaean community here in parliament house and hear directly from them about their surviving population in Iraq, which is suffering enormously under the ongoing ISIS onslaught.

It brings me to the situation in Australia. I want to commend all of these communities in Australia, whether they be the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, the Mandaeans, the Shabak or the Yezidis. There are communities here in Sydney, and you will see many Sydney members speaking on this motion, because those communities are predominantly settled in our biggest city, the melting pot that is Sydney. I have to report that all of them have come peacefully, live peacefully and work as good Australians to establish themselves here in Sydney. Hearing
from them has been very important to the understanding of members of this House about what is occurring to their relatives, neighbours and friends and people they left behind in Iraq.

All Australians can be proud of the government's response with humanitarian aid. I know this parliament would endorse unanimously the ongoing support of humanitarian aid, in particular, and the humanitarian relief mission for people in such a state. The government has a suite of measures, including the response to terrorism, because the safety of our community is our highest priority. It is the highest priority of any government. The government is putting forward a package of measures this week to deal with the ongoing security environment here in Australia.

It affords me the opportunity to raise some matters occurring in Sydney in particular. I wholeheartedly express my support for the Lebanese Maronite in Parramatta, centred around Our Lady of Lebanon Church and Our Lady of Lebanon School. They have been a fantastic community of great Australians now for a number of generations here in Parramatta in Sydney. To hear that they were threatened in recent days by some youths with an ISIL flag who approached their church and their school, threatening to kill young people, is an abhorrent thing to occur on the streets of Sydney, especially as it concerns such a peace-loving community, one that has been a great success story for migration to Australia. I want to ensure they understand that they have the full support of everybody here in this parliament and of all people in Sydney, and that these kinds of acts of violence and terror on our streets are completely unacceptable and need and deserve the highest form of response.

I also want to commend Mr Abbas Aly, who is the Islamic leader of the prayer centre in my local community, the Annangrove prayer centre, who said on ABC Radio that he strongly supports the Team Australia mantra of the Prime Minister in describing the situation Australia faces. Mr Abbas Aly, the leader of the Annangrove prayer centre, supports the government and the Prime Minister, because he knows that these people do not represent the religion of Islam. The Islamic State is not the true representative of this faith. They have perverted it for their own purposes and, whether they be conducting these acts of terror in Iraq or whether they be threatening people here on the streets of Sydney, they are outside the normal bounds of the religion of Islam, and they are to be condemned. So I welcome Mr Aly's comments, both in condemning his fellow Muslims who have fallen from their true religion, and in supporting the government and the Prime Minister's important Team Australia summary of what is going on in this country today.

On a sour note, it is appalling to see a mosque in Sydney auction the ISIS flag. Whether or not this flag, as Mr Keysar Trad said, is somehow an ancient symbol of their religion that has been perverted by ISIS, or IS, symbols matter and it is very important that this debate not be confused by these sorts of acts, including the auction of an ISIS flag. I urge all Islamic leaders in Sydney to join Mr Abbas Aly in strongly condemning violence and in condemning IS, and also to refrain from using the symbols that have been used by this evil terrorist group in Iraq and its representatives here in Australia, because it is vital that the whole community understands that Islam condemns these acts and condemns these people here in Australia. The auctioning of this flag in Sydney, which was reported widely and shown on YouTube, was a very unfortunate event. I fully support Premier Mike Baird, who came out strongly to say that we would be taking action against anyone supporting ISIS and anyone giving support to terror in New South Wales and Australia.
This motion calls for greater aid. I think that is a worthy objective that we can all support. Human beings are thrust into these conditions by great evils—a 'death cult' as the Prime Minister puts it, and it is a death cult, because these people do worship death. They are willing to blow themselves up, to kill themselves, for the sake of killing others. It is a death cult. It is vital that nations like Australia, the United States and all of the different countries that are forming a coalition, including countries in the Middle East, act to protect basic human rights. That is what this is about. It is worthy that we are sending forces to assist the international coalition in providing succour to people who are having their basic human rights violated. We strongly support the government and the government's attempts to eradicate radicalism and violence and to deal with those people here in Australia who, God forbid, are working to support the zealotry of the Islamic State.

Most of all today, we send a message to those minorities who have so successfully migrated here to Australia and formed such great communities in Sydney and our other cities. We support them and their fellow human beings in their difficult circumstances in Iraq, and this government and the Australian parliament is prepared to act.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (11:22): When I think of Australian values, words that come to mind include 'democracy', 'peace', 'secularism' and 'the rule of law'. They are the values which define our system of government, our culture and, indeed, our approach to international relations and diplomacy. As a nation and as a people, Australia has never been involved in unilateral invasion and conflict. It is not in our nature and it does not fit well with our values. But we do play our part in upholding the values of democracy, peace and the rule of law and in protecting the sanctity of life. We are known throughout the world for our loyalty and for our staunch adherence to and willingness to stand up for those values that I mentioned earlier. Once again, Australia is entering a region of conflict. But as is always the case for our nation and its people, we do not put our own dedicated and skilled personnel in harm's way lightly. These are steps which we take with great seriousness and consideration.

It is well accepted that the 2003 Iraq war was a mistake which was costly for the people of Iraq and for participating countries including Australia. Overnight we saw the former Prime Minister John Howard admit that he was embarrassed by the actions that were taken in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Not only was the Prime Minister embarrassed, it was the nation of Australia and its people that were embarrassed by that unjustified action. But 2014 is not 2003. In 2003, the government of Iraq and the majority of the Iraqi population opposed the military action of the United States and the so-called coalition of the willing. The aim of the 2003 action was poorly defined and changed during the course of the invasion. At the beginning it was to eradicate weapons of mass destruction, then later on it became regime change. The 2003 war was based on false information about weapons of mass destruction, and the UN's weapons inspectors were not given enough time to do their work. The war was not supported by the United Nations, and the international community was overwhelmingly opposed to military action.

In contrast, today, the democratically elected national unity government of Iraq is seeking help from the international community to protect civilians from the real threat of mass atrocity crimes or genocide. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the shadow minister for foreign affairs, Tanya Plibersek, recently wrote in an opinion piece on Australia's approach to this mission in Iraq and adherence to the doctrine to protect in guiding our decision to support the
action. The doctrine to protect, developed through the United Nations, through which the former Labor foreign affairs minister Gareth Evans had an influential hand, informs the decisions of governments and countries as to the right time to intervene in foreign disputes and humanitarian crises. It was born out of horrific acts of barbarism like the 1994 Rwandan genocide or the conflict in Kosovo and it sets out a set of criteria which should be met before taking the difficult decision to become involved in such actions. Those criteria include that there is a just cause, the intention is right, the action is a last resort, the action has legitimate authority, it is proportionate, and it has a reasonable prospect of success.

In regard to the situation in Iraq, Labor is of the belief that these criteria have been met in respect to Australia's commitment to this action. Over the last few months, the horrific and barbaric nature of the Islamic State has shocked the world. We have watched as innocent people of Iraq have been displaced and forced to flee their homes with nothing but their lives. Just this weekend, the news broke of more than 60,000 people, mainly Syrian Kurds, seeking refuge in Turkey as Islamic state militants continued to seize land and villages in Syria. Until recently, Turks and Kurds had fought a civil war that killed 40,000 people. Now Turkey accepts Kurds as refugees. This is evidence of ISIS's power and ability to change the geopolitical situation in the Middle East and the dynamics of the region. As caring, compassionate global citizens, Australians have been deeply saddened at the news and the images of peace-loving people in northern Iraq and Syria clutching their loved ones as they flee what has become a ruthless, evil force seemingly ready to kill at will anyone that does not share their extreme radicalism and bloodlust.

But although the horrible scenes appear as a distant nightmare, we have been reminded of how quickly this nightmare could be visited upon the people of Australia. Last week we saw a joint task force uncover evidence of a plot to undertake terrorist activity here in Australia. Across Sydney and Brisbane, more than 800 police carried out pre-dawn raids searching 25 homes in two states, detaining and questioning 15 men and charging two. For Australians, this news was a salient reminder of the horrible truth that we are not immune from the threat of terrorism here in Australia and there are evil people intent on destroying Australians' peaceful way of life. Thankfully, we have also seen the government rethink some of its budget cuts in programs that are aimed at creating harmony within our community.

I speak of the countering violent extremism program which was put in place by the previous Labor government and was proposed to be cut in this year's budget by the Abbott government. Thankfully, they have backed off on that commitment. They have also backed off on their commitment to get rid of the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor, which is performing a very important role in ensuring that our security and intelligence laws are up to date and armed with the necessary actions to combat the threat of terrorism. More recently, we have seen the Attorney-General back off on what were draconian Racial Discrimination Act changes. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the 800 individuals who were involved in uncovering this plot last week for their professionalism and dedication to the cause of protecting Australian citizens.

Labor is supportive of Australia's humanitarian mission to northern Iraq through the provision of military personnel and equipment. We are proud to be among upwards of 50 countries in a coalition committed to countering the spread of ISIL. But we are not blind supporters of this mission. Our support is conditional on the belief that we should be only
committing our resources as long as it takes the Iraqi government to regain control of its own security to protect its people. We would also like to thank the government for its bipartisan approach and call on them to once again ensure that they are forthcoming with information on this very important mission over coming weeks in the parliament to keep the Australian people well apprised of its progress.

In respect of aid assistance to the region and the humanitarian effort, particularly the support for refugees who are in very difficult circumstances—and many are women and children—Labor of course supports the nature of this motion and the call for increasing aid to assist those refugees who are fleeing this persecution.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to wish our service men and women all the very best on their mission. I say to them: you have the full support of the Labor Party and the people of Australia in the important work that you will do in this region. There is no doubt that your bravery, knowledge and skills will help save countless lives. We are indebted to you for your service, and the thoughts and prayers of the people of our nation are with you.

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (11:32): It is with great conviction I stand today to second the motion put forward by the member for Mitchell. I strongly support this motion to recognise the ongoing violence, intimidation, harassment and discrimination of religious and ethnic groups in Iraq and Syria at the hands of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The swift and bloody emergence of this lethal terrorist group is of deep concern to this government and we strongly condemn their brutal activities in Iraq and Syria. Considered a terrorist organisation by many countries, including Australia, the Islamic State has committed violent atrocities against civilians and foreign expatriates, including: the ruthless persecution and targeting of religious and racial minorities in Iraq and Syria; the barbaric kidnapping and killing of two American journalists and a British aid worker; and the mass execution of its enemies. Whilst conflicts in Syria and Iraq are far from our doors, this gross violation of human rights is of deep concern to this government and many Australians.

I believe it is important that this House welcome, recognise and commend the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the immigration minister for their comprehensive response to the growing humanitarian crisis. Australian officials have repeatedly raised the Islamic State's blatant violation of human rights with the Iraqi government and the United Nations Security Council. Australia co-sponsored a new UNSC resolution to condemn and express disapproval for all terrorist acts committed by the Islamic State and the al-Nusra Front in Iraq and Syria. The resolution, adopted on 16 August, makes clear that the international community will not tolerate their brutal activities. In step with the Iraqi government, Australia also made the first flight of military stores to the Kurdish region and participated in a humanitarian airdrop to the besieged town of Amerli. The drop included the delivery of 15 pallets of food, water and hygiene packs—enough for 2,600 people for a day.

These initiatives are important because, while we as a government have the responsibility to protect the security of our own citizens, it is through our concern and compassion for the welfare of all humans that we commit to helping others who are suffering in the international community. As such, I call on the House to commend this government's contribution to international efforts to protect people against the advances of the Islamic State.

On 19 June, this government announced that it would contribute $5 million to the work of the United Nations refugee agency and the World Food Program in Iraq. In addition to
financial assistance, we have also considered ways that Australia can contribute to the international humanitarian crisis closer to home. The government has set aside a minimum of 4,400 resettlement places in the 2014-15 refugee and humanitarian programs for ethnic and religious minorities fleeing the humanitarian crisis in Iraq and Syria. Iraqi Christians and Yazidis are also now listed as eligible for special humanitarian visas.

The security implications of the escalating Islamic State terrorist situation are not geographically confined to Syria and Iraq. The growing reach of the deadly Islamic State poses a threat to the security of all Australians, both here and abroad. And just as the wellbeing of Macarthur residents is my highest priority, the collective safety and security of the entire Australian population is the highest priority for this government. I move that the House acknowledge the government's steadfast commitment to strengthening our national security through international and domestic channels. Abroad, we have intensified our international counter-terrorism engagement, particularly through multilateral efforts, targeted financial sanctions and travel bans with countries of the Middle East and South-East Asia and key allies.

I also urge this House to recognise the serious threat that the growing number of Australians travelling to Syria and Iraq pose to Australia's national security. The number of Australians involved in the Iraq and Syria conflicts is substantially higher than in previous foreign conflicts, including Afghanistan, in which eight Australians were later convicted of planning terrorist attacks back in Australia. According to ASIO, around 60 Australians have been identified as currently fighting in Iraq and Syria and a further 90 Australians as involved with extremist groups within these countries in other ways. There is a real and growing concern that upon their return to Australia they would use the deadly skills they have learnt from supporting and fighting with the Islamic State to do harm to Australia, its national interests and its citizens. That is why the government is committed to prosecuting people who have engaged in terrorism related activities and to strengthening our ability to monitor, arrest and prosecute people who have been involved with terrorist groups abroad.

To boost Australia's counter-terrorism capacity, this government is providing a further $630 million over the next four years to the Australian counter-terrorism agencies. The funds will make a crucial contribution to a range of counter-terrorism measures, particularly those that give security agencies the resources, technical skills and legislative powers they need to combat the evolving challenges of home-grown terrorism. Terrorists and violent extremists represent a fringe minority and are an affront to the values of all Australians. This government refuses to bow down to the Islamic State. There is no place in Australia or anywhere else in the international community for such groups, and this government will not tolerate such barbaric activities in Australia or their infliction on innocent civilians overseas. I stand firm today to call upon the government to continue to focus on the humanitarian aid mission and to work closely with our allies to ensure that more people are not exposed to the brutal extremists of the Islamic State.

Mr MARLES (Corio) (11:37): I rise to support this private member's motion and, in saying that, state that now is the time for unity. That is, unity in the face of barbarism and terror. Our world changed on September 11 2001, when terror entered our lives in a way which it has not left since. Every aspect of the way in which we go about our world changed on that day. A month or two ago, I was at Ground Zero in New York. I visited the September
11 memorial, which is a remarkable museum and a remarkable memorial to those who perished on that day in those attacks, a number of whom were Australian citizens.

What we have seen in the last couple of months is perhaps the most unsettling and the most significant development in the situation of terror since September 11. With Islamic State, we are now witnessing a form of terror and form of organisation whose method is brutality and whose method is about putting on display their blood lust and, in the process, seeking to strike terror and fear in the hearts of everyone. The public beheadings of James Foley, Steven Sotloff, David Haines and many others are amongst the most appalling images that we have seen, as are those images of young children and others holding the heads of soldiers in a manner which is unfathomable to anybody within our society. We live in an age where there are crucifixions being undertaken as a form of terrorising others. This is what we are facing and this is what needs to be contested.

The ideology underpinning all of this is an ideology of intolerance and an ideology that says that their way of looking at the human experience is the only way. As a result, there are indeed many minorities in northern Iraq and in Syria—such as Christian Assyrians, Chaldeans, the Yazidis and Mandaeans—who are experiencing the persecution and the death that is being wrought by Islamic State. Australia's international reflex, when faced with a moment of this type, has always been to play our part and to pull our weight. That is what we are doing now in northern Iraq, along with many other countries who are deciding to contest and defeat this brutality. It is important and it is the Australian way to act in this.

It is not only a danger that we face in a global sense in Syria and Iraq but, as we saw last week, this danger is being brought home to our own country and to our own streets. The counter-terrorism operation which we witnessed last week was the single largest in Australia's history. It shows the terror that we are facing globally is a very real terror that we are facing in Australia as well. From that work and the diligence and the professional efforts of those persons working for Australia's counter-terrorism agencies, we as a community and a society should take reassurance that we have the very best of the best looking after our interests and making us safe at home. For that, I thank them.

Labor's disposition in all of this is to support the efforts of the government and to work constructively with the government in a bipartisan way. We want to see the detail of all the measures that are being put forward, as anybody would expect us to do in being elected to this place and fulfilling our role with our own sense of diligence. This is a moment for bipartisanship and to work in cooperation with everyone in this building to do what we can. We are concerned, in saying that, that the humanitarian aid provided to the Middle East has been cut. We do support an intake of 4,400 coming from Syria and Iraq, but we do believe that ought to be in addition to our humanitarian intake. Most of all, we support the work of our personnel in doing the very dangerous work that they are and shouldering the burden of this. (Time expired)

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:42): I would like to start by commending the member for the Berowra for putting this motion before the House. I would also like to commend members of the opposition who have also spoken in support of this motion. In doing so, we need to acknowledge the absolute evil that the death cult of ISIS is. For we have two options: one option is that we can just look on from our TV screens and the other option is that we can do what Australia has always done, which is to join international coalitions. Where there is
evil in the world, where there are people who threaten freedom, where there are people who threaten democracy and where there are people who threaten liberty, we as a nation join in a coalition with other nations who have the same ideals and the same objectives and we work with those nations with our military forces.

That is what our troops have always done throughout history. Where our nation has committed troops to fight on foreign soil, they have never done so for territory or for conquest. It has always been to bring freedom, to bring peace and to bring prosperity to those foreign lands. Having our troops positioned currently in the United Arab Emirates—where they are ready if needed and in coalition with other nations—to fight that death cult in Iraq is in that same tradition that our military will take forward. Ultimately, the reason why we fight in foreign lands is because our servicemen know that that is the best way to protect the security and peace that we here enjoy in Australia. The best way is to try and extend that same peace, security and freedoms to people elsewhere in the world.

I would also like to commend the motion. The government is providing a further $630 million over four years to boost the counter-terrorism capacity and security of our Australian intelligence organisations. In doing so we need to acknowledge the problem that our security agents face—the radicalisation of youth, mostly Islamic youth, in many of our larger cities. What causes that radicalisation? We know that people who try to recruit people to their death cult, to radicalise those individuals, rely on the message that they are being targeted or being unfairly treated because when the government and our security agencies talk about the raised risk of terrorist threat in this country it is all a beat-up, it is all scaremongering. That line of debate and that line of thought and public commentary—and we have seen a substantial proportion of it in the media and even by some members of this parliament—actually feeds into the radicalisation of the youth. That dangerous denial of the problems we face feeds into the narrative that actually makes us all less safe. So I ask members of this parliament, members of the media and certain sections of the public who have a scepticism—often a healthy scepticism—about the needs for our security and defence forces to think very carefully before they make comments that this is all a beat-up, that this is all scaremongering and that groups are somehow being targeted, because when they make those public comments it feeds into the radicalisation of those youth and is something that the terrorist recruiters latch onto and use to try to radicalise people to their death cult—and it is a death cult. We have seen Australian citizens, people who were brought up here and went to Australian schools, going to Iraq and becoming suicide bombers. We have seen people who went to public schools in New South Wales recruited and photographed—and they are the most gruesome photographs—with people who have had their heads cut off. So we all have an obligation to make sure we are not engaging in any activity that encourages radicalisation.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (11:47): I am pleased to participate in this debate on humanitarian aid in Iraq. Despite the bipartisan acceptance that action must be taken to address the growing influence of the Islamic State, I think Australians are right to express concern about our involvement in another international conflict. The memory of our most recent venture in Iraq a mere decade ago still lingers, as does how this involvement has contributed to the human tragedy now unfolding in the Middle East.

We would do well to remember the basis of our initial involvement with the coalition of the willing. We were told by the then Prime Minister, John Howard, that our involvement was
not about a regime change but was all about the detection and destruction of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The fact is the then United States President, George W Bush, was desperate to establish a link between Saddam Hussein's regime and the 9/11 attack. Either the Australian government knew that this was contrary to all the advice from credible intelligence sources or was negligent in establishing the facts before embarking on such a cavalier military adventure.

The misguided and poorly planned coalition of the willing involvement in Iraq in 2003 created a power vacuum, impacting on all levels of Iraq's administration and bureaucracy, which has in turn contributed to the unleashing of certain forces within the Islamic sect that has allowed the rise of terrorist groups such as the Islamic State. This is directly responsible for the more than 1.4 million people, including Assyrians, Chaldean Catholics, Mandaean, Yazidis and other minorities, fleeing their homelands or having to face what can only be referred to as genocide.

The rise of the Islamic State, a cruel medieval theocracy that hates not only the West but also much of the Islamic world, now overrides any considerations, quite frankly, of the past. The fact is the international community has no choice but to take action to support these minorities or stand accused of aiding and abetting genocide. However, I believe Australia has a higher moral responsibility, as do all the partners of the coalition of the willing, to help clean up the mess that we unwittingly helped create.

Many expatriate Iraqi groups in my electorate, including the Iraqi Australian Christian Association, the Assyrian Universal Alliance, the Mandaeans Australian culture group, the Assyrian Australian National Federation, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Chaldean Catholic community and the broader Kurdish community, expect that we will play a role in re-establishing security in their homeland. It is right and proper that this parliament, with the support of both major parties, is standing up against ethnic cleansing in Iraq by providing humanitarian relief to those who are in such desperate need, particularly the Yazidis on Mount Sinjar, and by providing military support for the Kurdish Peshmerga forces who are leading the fight against the Islamic State. Recently I read an account by a young commander in the Kurdish Peshmerga all-female unit. Nuve Rojhat, in speaking about the Islamic State, said:

… what they hate most is that Kurdish women have rights and they want to take them away from us. We are here to support all women, not just Kurdish women … They [IS] believe women are less than human and just here to be used. They are selling Yazidi women in Mosul for just $20.

If that is not a plea for becoming involved and assisting, I am not sure what is.

Under the circumstances there is a need to review our humanitarian intake from the Middle East. In view of this crisis, it is only right that we continue to play our role in providing humanitarian relief to those in need, but it is also right, because of our involvement in the coalition of the willing, that we play our role in resettling people caught up in this dreadful conflict.

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (11:53): I rise to support this motion and commend the member for Mitchell for bringing on this debate today. Obviously, at the time the member for Mitchell lodged this motion some weeks back, the issues were very serious and it is fair to say they have only become more so in recent days and weeks. As all speakers in this debate have said, this motion is welcome for highlighting the humanitarian effort that Australia is taking—
the action we are taking on behalf of those persecuted minorities in Iraq—and for the way we are doing that in concert with many other nations. Already the Australian Defence Force has completed humanitarian drops in mid and late August, providing water, high-energy biscuits and hygiene kits to those stranded and under severe threat.

In the time available, I do not want to revisit all the examples of the utter and awful horror that the world has been witness to over recent weeks, but I do want to say that this motion has been moved—and those who have spoken on it have done so—in a bipartisan spirit. Speakers on this side have rightly pointed out that this is an issue where the opposition has offered the government support, and speakers on the other side have rightly pointed out that the Prime Minister has kept the opposition briefed and informed of all serious developments and that will continue. As we reflect over the last couple of weeks since we last sat and the events particularly during the course of last week, we are acutely aware that this is very much an issue that is both far away and close to home—far away in Iraq but close to home because those perpetrating this terror seek to do so wherever they can.

As speakers have already noted, the actions of Australia's security agencies and police last week highlighted that issue. It is something that needs to be confronted abroad and at home. Our Defence personnel, as the member for Corio said, are acting on behalf of freedom, and we wish them the very best. Of course, they have our prayers for the work they are doing with more than 40 other nations. Before I conclude, I want to address some of the issues around our security agencies. Clearly it is absolutely vital that they have the best resources possible and they have the best tools they can possibly have. That means that they are funded to do their job—we have seen the government do this—and that they have the best laws possible. This week in the parliament we will be working together to ensure they have the best laws possible. When it comes to issues like metadata, there are some who are opposed to security action in this area. We need to be reminded at all times that when the head of ASIO speaks, we should listen because it is the overall freedom his and other agencies are trying to protect.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (11:58): Australia's involvement in Iraq should be defined and conducted with humanitarian protection as its primary and overwhelming objective. There is no doubt of the depth of the humanitarian crisis that is occurring now in Iraq. In Iraq 1.8 million people have been internally displaced and hundreds of thousands are in need of humanitarian assistance. The situation in Syria is also dire: 6.5 million Syrians are internally displaced and 10 million need humanitarian support.

The context for what has been said in debate on this motion should be, however, to recognise that the Abbott government cut $7.6 billion from foreign aid in this year's budget. The budget cuts to aid come on top of the $8.4 billion reduction caused by abandoning the commitment that our aid budget would reach 0.5 per cent of GNI—a commitment originally made by John Howard and which Mr Abbott promised to keep as late as December last year. The effect of these cuts in Iraq meant that our country program went from $7.7 million to zero in this year's budget. To look internationally, we should note that the United Nations called for $6.5 billion in aid for the Syria crisis—the largest ever appeal for funds. Australia under the coalition has pledged us $30 million or so in aid: a sadly inadequate response to an enormous humanitarian need. Labor in government pledged over $100 million in aid to the crisis in Syria.
I was left in no doubt as to the extent of the crisis caused by the Syrian conflict. I met recently with the president of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society, Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid, who told me of the difficulties that Jordan is facing with more than 1.4 million refugees from Syria now living in Jordan. Labor calls on the government to substantially increase Australia's contributions to the United Nations and to relief organisations which are delivering humanitarian assistance in Syria and in Iraq. This should include increased support to UN agencies that are operating in the neighbouring countries, including Jordan and Lebanon, which have so far borne the majority of the burden of displaced Syrians, with insufficient international assistance. As I have said, Australia thus far has contributed only $30 million or so to the Syrian crisis. Based on the size of our economy, Oxfam has calculated that our fair share of this international fundraising effort would be in the order of $117 million—and just by way of comparison, looking at other international contributors: Denmark has managed to contribute 163 per cent of its fair share, and the UK has given 141 per cent of what would be its fair share.

This is the consequence of the kinds of cuts to foreign aid that have been made by the Abbott government in this budget. It leaves Australia unable to contribute at the same level at which other countries have found themselves able to contribute. It leaves Australia are unable to do our fair share—as we should, as one of the wealthy countries of the world—in repairing the damage and in trying to assist in what is undoubtedly a very deep humanitarian crisis now unfolding in the Middle East. Again, you could point to the fact that on 12 September, the United States announced a further commitment of $500 million to Syria and to regional countries involved in supporting Syrians displaced by the violence. We have seen the United States also contributing a further $48 million in humanitarian assistance to respond to the crisis in Iraq, bringing the total funding in 2014 from the United States for Iraq to more than $186 million dollars, and all of this additional funding is going to go to supporting humanitarian needs including the preparation for winter.

There is also a role for Australia through our refugee and humanitarian migration program. We have had an announcement from the coalition government, back in August, of some 4,400 places for Iraqis and Syrians fleeing violence and persecution but, regrettably, these places are not an overall increase to Australian's humanitarian intake but will apparently be part of the existing 13,750 places allocated annually under the program.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): Order! 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 day of sitting.

BILLS

Minerals Resource Rent Tax Repeal and Other Measures Bill 2014
Energy Efficiency Opportunities (Repeal) Bill 2014
Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Health Card and Other Measures) Bill 2014
Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (Classification Tools and Other Measures) Bill 2014
Corporations Amendment (Simple Corporate Bonds and Other Measures) Bill 2014
Land Transport Infrastructure Amendment Bill 2014
Meteorology Amendment (Online Advertising) Bill 2014

Assent

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

COMMITTEES

Australia Fund Establishment Committee

Appointment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell) (12:03): Madam Speaker has received a message from the Senate transmitting a resolution agreed to by the Senate relating to the establishment of a joint select committee on the Australia Fund Establishment. The Senate requests concurrence of the House in this resolution:

(1) That a joint select committee, to be known as the Joint Select Committee on the Australia Fund Establishment, be established to inquire into and report on:

The establishment of a fund to support rural and manufacturing industries, with particular reference to:

(a) the need for a fund to assist rural and manufacturing industries in crisis and support communities affected by natural disasters, including the following assistance:

(i) emergency or ongoing financial relief;
(ii) a loan to such a business;
(iii) act as a guarantor for all or part of a loan or proposed loan to such a business;
(iv) purchase all or part of an existing loan to such a business;
(v) capitalise or waive interest owed by such a business;
(vi) assume control of such a business for a particular period;
(vii) grant funds to an appropriate industry body; and
(viii) grant funds to such a business for the purpose of purchasing new technology to make it more economically viable and competitive or restructuring it; and
(b) whether:

(i) existing bankruptcy and insolvency laws should be modified or temporarily relaxed for businesses in times of crisis; and

(ii) any foreign bankruptcy or insolvency laws should be adopted as laws of the Commonwealth;

(2) That the committee deliver its final report on or before 30 June 2015;

(3) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips, 1 member of the House of Representatives to be nominated by any minority group or independent member, 2 senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 1 senator to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, and 1 senator to be nominated by any minority group or independent Senator;

(4) That:

CHAMBER
(a) participating members may be appointed to the committee on the nomination of the Leader of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, or any minority group or independent senator;

(b) participating members shall be taken to be a member of the committee for the purposes of forming a quorum if a majority of members of the committee are not present; and

(c) participating members may participate in hearings of evidence and deliberations of the committee and have all rights of a committee member, but may not vote on any questions before the committee;

(5) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(6) That the committee may proceed to the dispatch of business notwithstanding that not all members have not been duly nominated and appointed and notwithstanding any vacancy;

(7) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint select committee until presentation of the committee's final report or until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time, whichever is the earlier;

(8) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair;

(9) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee;

(10) That at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting;

(11) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote;

(12) That 5 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House;

(13) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members, and that each subcommittee shall have at least 1 Government member of either House and one non-Government member of either House;

(14) That the committee have power to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine;

(15) That the committee 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;

(16) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House;

(17) That 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;

(18) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced;

(19) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit and sit in public or in private;

(20) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives;

(21) That the committee may report from time to time;
(22) That the committee be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and be empowered to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee with the approval of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(23) That the committee be empowered to publish from day to day such documents and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public; and

(24) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

The Senate requests the concurrence of the House in this resolution.

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

**Trade and Investment Growth Committee Appointment**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell) (12:04): Madam Speaker has received a message from the Senate transmitting a resolution agreed to by the Senate relating to the establishment of a joint select committee on Trade and Investment Growth. The Senate requests concurrence of the House in this resolution:

(1) That a joint select committee, to be known as the Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth, be established to inquire into and report on any measures to further boost Australia's trade and investment performance, including, but not limited to, barriers to trade; reduction of red tape and structural challenges and opportunities for the Australian community;

(2) That the committee deliver its final report and recommendations on or before 31 August 2015;

(3) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips, 1 member of the House of Representatives to be nominated by any minority group or independent member, 2 senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 1 senator to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, and 1 senator to be nominated by any minority group or independent Senator;

(4) That:

(a) participating members may be appointed to the committee on the nomination in the:

(i) House of Representatives, of the Government or Opposition Whip or Whips, or any minority group or independent member; and

(ii) Senate, of the Leader of the Government or Opposition, or any minority group or independent senator;

(b) participating members shall be taken to be a member of the committee for the purposes of forming a quorum if a majority of members of the committee are not present; and

(c) participating members may participate in hearings of evidence and deliberations of the committee and have all rights of a committee member except that a participating member may not vote on any questions before the committee;

(5) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(6) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint select committee until presentation of the committee's final report or until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time, whichever is the earlier;

(7) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair;
(8) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee;

(9) That at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting;

(10) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote;

(11) That 5 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House;

(12) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members, and that each subcommittee shall have at least 1 Government member of either House and one non-Government member of either House;

(13) That the committee have power to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine;

(14) That the committee 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;

(15) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House;

(16) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum;

(17) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced;

(18) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit and sit in public or in private;

(19) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives;

(20) That the committee may report from time to time;

(21) That the committee be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and be empowered to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee with the approval of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(22) That the committee be empowered to publish from day to day such documents and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public; and

(23) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

The Senate requests the concurrence of the House in this resolution.

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

**Public Accounts and Audit Committee**

**Report**

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (12:04): On behalf of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, I present the following reports: *Report 444: Annual report 2013-14* and
Report 445: Regional Cities Program, KPIs and Medicare—Review of Auditor-General’s reports Nos 10 to 31 (2013-14), and I ask the leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the reports.

Leave granted.

Dr SOUTHCOTT: The report I have just presented from the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit entitled Report 444: Annual report 2013-14 details the activities of the committee as well as the discharge of its duties. These include:

- reviewing reports of the Auditor-General on behalf of the parliament
- reviewing the Defence Materiel Organisation Major Projects Report
- considering the operation and resources of the Australian National Audit Office and the Parliamentary Budget Office
- approving the nomination of the appointment of the Independent Auditor of the Australian National Audit Office
- encouraging parliamentary and public awareness of the financial and related operations of government.

The report also details the committee's continuing oversight of the Public Management Reform Agenda. The committee tabled a report in June 2014 into the development of the first batch of rules for the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the report to the House.

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

Dr SOUTHCOTT: The report I have just presented from the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit entitled Report 445: Regional Cities Program, KPIs and Medicare—Review of Auditor-General’s reports Nos 10 to 31 (2013-14) details the findings of the committee's examination of the following four Australian National Audit Office Reports:

- Report No. 21, Pilot Project to Audit Key Performance Indicators
- Report No. 25, Management of the Building Better Regional Cities Program
- Report No. 26, Medicare Compliance Audits
- Report No. 27, Integrity of Medicare Customer Data

A key theme across all four reports was the importance of a robust performance framework. The committee is a determined advocate of accurate and effective performance measurement and reporting. As previous committee reports have emphasised, accurate and effective performance measurement and reporting enables the public, the parliament and other stakeholders to assess whether resources are being used efficiently and whether programs and services are achieving their intended results.

Chapter 2 of the report discusses the committee's findings concerning report No. 21 on KPIs. The committee found that Commonwealth agencies have experienced difficulty in developing KPIs that measure the effectiveness of a program's contribution to achieving outcomes. The committee recommended that Finance ensure that performance management and reporting is recognised as a central component of agency governance arrangements and that guidance is clear, consistent and supports agencies in the development of effective KPIs. This will be a particularly important aspect of the new performance framework to be introduced as part of the public management reform agenda and Public Governance,
Performance and Accountability Act 2013. The committee commended the audit office on its development of a preliminary methodology to support ongoing audits of KPIs and further recommended that it continue to implement systematic audits of the appropriateness of KPIs and the completeness and accuracy of agency reporting. This has been a longstanding interest of the committee and the committee will continue to monitor the implementation of better KPIs.

Chapter 3 of the report discusses the committee's findings concerning report No. 25 on the Building Better Regional Cities Program. The committee was disappointed in the overall administration of this program. The committee found that the program was implemented in a way that gave insufficient attention to the program's objective and KPIs. The program cost more than had been budgeted; it promised to deliver up to 8,000 homes but actually delivered 247. It delivered significantly less in the way of additional affordable housing than the program target, and many of the contract projects were delayed in delivery. There were also some serious issues relating to the administration of this program.

Given the seriousness of the issues raised in the review, the committee has recommended that every six months for the life of the 44th Parliament the Department of Social Services continue to inform the committee about the status of housing built with the assistance of the program. The committee believes there is much to be learnt from this matter. Accordingly, it is further recommended that both the Department of Social Services and the Department of the Environment conduct a full and frank review of the Building Better Regional Cities Program to increase the effectiveness of future program administration.

Chapter 4 of the report discusses the committee's findings regarding report No. 26 on Medicare compliance audits, including the Increased Medicare Compliance Audits initiative. The committee found that the management of this initiative by the Department of Human Services ultimately represented a net cost to government rather than delivering the anticipated savings. The department did not meet its overall targets against two key performance indicators for this initiative, nor did it develop and implement a methodology to accurately measure, monitor and report on savings achieved against targets. The committee recommended that the Department of Human Services develop a methodology to better monitor performance outcomes and report on the effectiveness of Medicare compliance audits, with the department to report back to the committee on this matter in six months. The committee also recommended that the department undertake a cost-benefit analysis of its Medicare compliance activities to ensure more effective targeting of compliance risks to the Medicare program and increase the cost-effectiveness of its compliance approach.

Chapter 5 of the report discusses the committee's findings concerning report No. 27 on the integrity of Medicare customer data. Over the course of the review, the committee was encouraged to note that the Department of Human Services is working to resolve intertwined and duplicate records in the Medicare database which pose potential clinical safety and privacy risks. However, the committee noted that the department could not demonstrate implementation of previous recommendations made in this area by the Audit Office in 2004-05. It is disappointing that the department missed an opportunity to enhance its performance by implementing these recommendations.

The committee recommended that the Department of Human Services undertake targeted data integrity testing of Medicare customer records, better manage duplicate and intertwined
records and implement controls to ensure that only those customers eligible to receive Medicare benefits can access them. Given the length of time these data integrity issues have been evident, the department has been asked to report back to the committee on this matter in six months.

In conclusion, I thank committee members for their deliberation on these significant matters. I also thank departmental representatives who appeared at public hearings for assisting the committee in its important role of holding Commonwealth agencies to account for the efficiency and effectiveness with which they use public monies. I commend the report to the House.

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

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (12:12): by leave—I am proud of the Building Better Regional Cities Program. It is one of three signature programs of the last Labor government to promote affordable housing. The program involved awarding funding through a competitive applications process for local infrastructure projects that would support new housing developments. It is important to keep in mind that this program was supporting infrastructure to provide the catalyst for affordable housing rather than to build the houses themselves.

There were three criticisms in the ANAO report that I want to speak to briefly. One was the decision to restrict councils to one successful application. This decision came about after funding of the program was halved to $100 million in order to assist with flood reconstruction. I think it was quite reasonable after this event to restrict successful applications to one per council. The second criticism was around the subsequent socioeconomic prioritisation within the merit assessment. Restricting applications for those councils that had a SEIFA index score of below 1,000 was important to maximise the equity aspects of this program. The prioritisation of applications with socioeconomic disadvantage factors was also a sound decision. With a limited amount of funding, it was important to target the program to areas where resources were most constrained and affordable housing would have the greatest impact. As long as applications are sound, what is wrong with preferring projects from low socioeconomic areas?

The third criticism was around evaluation of value for money. The minister exercised discretion on five applications not originally recommended by the department, and I contend that that was reasonable. The department provided recommendations to the minister in a covering minute. The covering minute for grouping 3, which I am referring to, noted:

You only consider applications from the third group with a requirement to improve the value for money to be delivered during the negotiation of the funding agreement.

Regarding claims that these five applications also did not meet at least one other criterion, it is important to place this in context. Of the 15 applications recommended by the department, 11 had been assessed as not adequately meeting one of the five merit criteria; seven had been assessed as not meeting two of the merit criteria; and three had been assessed as not meeting three of the five criteria. So, besides the value for money aspect, which I will return to briefly, these five projects were similar to nearly three-quarters of recommended projects in not meeting one of the five merit criteria. The minister approved these five applications on the basis that the department was to improve the value for money to be delivered during negotiations of the funding agreement.
Mr Innis from the DSS stated: 'It is fair to say that the minister had the discretion to approve whatever project he felt was worthy, provided he explained his rationale. This bit is certainly true, and he asked for the Department in negotiation to seek to increase the value for money proposition.' The ANAO stated that the value for money for four of the five projects in this category was improved. The ANAO also stated that the department did not update the minister as to the state of negotiations around value-for-money outcomes. So we had a situation where most of the five applications rated highly in other parts of the merit assessment but fell down on value for money. The department told the minister, 'You can consider these five if we go away and improve the value for money.' The minister requested the department to do that and they subsequently improved the value for money for four of the five projects.

Ultimately, this program provided critical infrastructure that I am confident, over the course of time, will provide the catalyst for significant affordable housing. Targets in the short term were never going to be met, because it is dependent on the development consent of councils and various state government actions. In my own area of Lake Macquarie I have the town of Wyee, which is a Depression-era settlement, that is benefiting from this program. This is a town only 90 minutes drive from Sydney, yet it still does not have sewerage connected. I am confident that this program will provide the critical catalyst, with investment from Hunter Water, to provide this sewerage, which is long overdue in an important part of my region. I commend the rest of the report to the parliament and thank the secretariat for their very hard work on this and all other projects.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (12:17): I move:
That the House take note of Report 445.

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

Reference to Federation Chamber

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (12:17): I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.
Question agreed to.

Report

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (12:17): On behalf of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, I ask leave of the House to present executive minutes on reports of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit.

Leave granted.

Dr SOUTHCOTT: I present executive minutes on reports 417, 423, 436, 437 and 439 of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit.
Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).

Mr TEHAN: by leave—the committee's inquiry into the National Security Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2014 has come at a time of heightened concern about the threat of terrorism to Australia and its interests overseas.

The bill implements many of the bipartisan recommendations made by the committee of the previous parliament in its review of possible reforms to Australia's national security legislation.

The recommendations implemented in the bill include:

- changes to ASIO's employment framework,
- changes to ASIO's warrant based powers, including around computer access warrants and the use of force during the execution of warrants,
- the introduction of a Special Intelligence Operations scheme,
- changes to ASIO's ability to incorporate and share information with other organisations, and
- changes affecting the ability of ASIS to collect intelligence on Australians overseas.

The bill also includes a small number of additional measures not previously looked at by the committee. These include an expansion of the secrecy offences applying to employees or other persons in an arrangement with an intelligence agency.

The committee supports the intent of the bill to increase the effectiveness of Australia's intelligence organisations at a time when the threat to our country from terrorism remains high.

While the time frame for the inquiry was short, the committee still received a considerable number of submissions and conducted both public and private hearings. Informed by the evidence, the report has focused on the issues that were of most concern to the committee.

Recent media commentary has included claims that the special intelligence operations framework provided for in the bill could be used to authorise torture by ASIO officers. I should put on the record that the committee received evidence from a range of legal, human rights and civil liberties groups—including the Law Council of Australia, the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Australian Lawyers Alliance and the civil liberties councils across Australia—and these groups did not suggest that the bill would enable torture and they did not highlight to the committee any need for torture to be explicitly prohibited in the legislation.
The committee has made 16 recommendations to improve safeguards and strengthen public confidence that the powers extended in the bill cannot be used beyond their legitimate policy intent.

The recommendations include:

- clarifying that computer access warrants may only authorise access to a computer network to the extent necessary to collect intelligence on a specified security matter,
- reporting requirements relating to the use of force by ASIO officers during the execution of a warrant,
- requiring the Attorney-General to approve the commencement, variation or extension of all special intelligence operations,
- new notification requirements to support oversight of special intelligence operations by the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security,
- exemptions from the secrecy offences relating to special intelligence operations for disclosures in the course of legal advice or in complaints to the Inspector-General, and
- clarifying that the secrecy offences relating to staff and other entrusted persons of intelligence agencies do not apply to information disclosed to the Inspector-General.

Importantly, the Inspector-General has told the committee she has the authority she needs to oversight the measures in the bill. However, her office needs sufficient resources and expertise to keep abreast with providing the necessary oversight of the intelligence agencies, and the committee has made a recommendation in support of this. The committee has further recommended that the position of the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor be filled as soon as practicable. Following consideration of its other recommendations, the committee has recommended that the bill be passed by the parliament.

I wish to thank members of the committee for their constructive and cooperative approach to the inquiry. I am pleased that we were able to reach bipartisan agreement on the issues of contention, and I trust that the committee's report will assist the parliament in its further debate on the bill. On behalf of the committee I sincerely thank those organisations and individuals who made written submissions and appeared at hearings. I particularly thank the Attorney-General's Department and ASIO for their high level of engagement during the inquiry. I would also like to take the opportunity to place on record my own and the committee's best wishes to Mr David Irvine in his retirement. He has done an outstanding job as Director-General. I would also like to place on record my thanks to the committee secretariat for their help during the reporting of this record. I commend the report to the House.

**Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr Ewen Jones (Herbert) (12:24): I rise to speak on the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014. This bill amends the Australian Citizenship Act of 2007. This bill will place children who are adopted by Australian citizens under
bilateral arrangements in the same position as children who are adopted by Australian citizens under the Hague Convention arrangements. At least one adoptive parent must be an Australian citizen at the time of adoption for the child to be eligible. At present, children adopted under bilateral arrangements require a passport from the home country and an Australian adoption visa to travel to Australia. This imposes additional complexity and cost on the adopting families. Under the amendments to be made to this bill, children will be able to be granted citizenship as soon as the adoption is finalised. They will then be able to travel to Australia on an Australian passport with their new families as Australian citizens.

The key feature of the bill is an amendment to subdivision AA of division 2 of part 2 of the act. The amendment simply expands the scope of the existing Hague Convention provisions so that they also cover adoptions in accordance with bilateral arrangements. The amendments made by the bill will apply for the benefit of all children adopted under bilateral arrangements, whether the adoption was finalised before or after these amendments come into force. Previously, bilateral adoptions were required to be finalised through Australian courts and required the child to apply for a visa to travel to Australia. Recently the Australian government amended the Family Law Regulations 1998 to provide automatic recognition of adoptions in partner countries of Taiwan, South Korea and South Africa and previous adoptions from Ethiopia. Prime Minister Abbott himself has met with Adoption Awareness Week patron Deborra-Lee Furness. They have also been involved with meetings with National Adoption Awareness Week board members.

In December last year Prime Minister Abbott announced that he would improve overseas adoptions. In his second reading speech in this place on 29 May 2014 he said:

… this bill is another step in delivering reform to intercountry adoptions.

For too long, adoption has been in the too-hard basket. For too long, it has been too hard to adopt and for too long, this has been a policy no-go zone.

It should not be that way—because adoption is all about giving children a better life. He has hit the nail on the head. The number of adoptions shows a substantial long-term decline of 32 per cent since 2003-04 and 77 per cent since 1988-89. In financial year 2012-13 Australians adopted more children from non-Hague Convention countries like Ethiopia, South Korea and Taiwan than they did from Hague Convention countries—40 per cent of Australian adoptions occur from Taiwan and South Korea. We have announced improvements to the process for families adopting from Taiwan and South Korea. Children adopted from Hague Convention countries which issue adoption compliance certificates are already able to obtain Australian citizenship as soon as the adoption is finalised. This has been the case since the enactment of the Australian Citizenship Act 2007. As the process for child adoption under bilateral arrangements, including automatic recognition under Australian law, is in substance identical, there is no reason those children should be treated differently under the Australian Citizenship Act.

The government wants to make it easier to adopt when it is in the best interests of the child. I think that at the heart of everything here we should always remember that this is about people. It is red tape that impacts on children who legitimately need a safe and loving home and on Australians who dream of providing that home. We want to remove the red tape and reduce the delays that do not benefit anyone. COAG—the Council of Australian Governments—has also agreed in principle to the new national overseas adoption service
from 2015, and the minister for immigration is developing options to reduce waiting times for visas for adopting children from overseas. Where a non-convention country meets these standards, there is no reason adoptions should not be recognised in the same way as adoptions from convention countries.

What I am about to say is not strictly to do with the legislation, but I will tie it up at the end and make my central point on the bill. My wife always says you have to walk a mile in someone's else's shoes. I have the three best children on the face of this planet—most of the time, anyway. I know the joy of celebrating a pregnancy, the preparations for the birth, the delivery and everything that comes after that. To watch your child go from being a baby in arms to a grown adult who disagrees with you in every way is an amazing journey. I recognise the joy and absolute luck I have had with my three children over two marriages. My current wife Linda was told that she should never expect to have children. We spoke about it and Linda said she could never do IVF or the like. This was a personal decision by her and it was guided by her faith. I simply agreed with her. We did, however, discuss adoption and foster parenting. It was a very live option for us until Linda discovered that she was pregnant. Andrew came along and joined Emma and Abbie in our family. So, while I have no direct involvement in this issue from a personal perspective, it is something which has been discussed in our family.

I have a mate and his sister who are adopted children. That mate is Clifford Kern, better known as CK to the people who listen to 106.3 breakfast radio in Townsville. Their adoptive parents were up-front with them all their lives and they are a beautiful family. CK recently met his birth father and he is working through that relationship. It is something he is doing with a smile on his face and love and understanding in his heart. I have a mate in Townsville, Wayne 'Nicho' Nicholson, who is an adoptive father. He and Margaret—or, to use her title, the long-suffering Margaret Nicholson—have an adopted son, Mitch. Mitch and CK are mates who greet each other with a hug and tell each other they are brothers from a different mother. Both these men and their roles in the adoption process are to be applauded. Nicho and Margaret will tell you that adoption made their family whole. It completed them. They were able to provide for Mitch and give him an upbringing of privilege. Nicho will tell you that adoption, when done right, is a brilliant thing. It is something which is not easy. The paperwork is onerous and invasive. In some ways, Nicho is anti the paperwork but he acknowledges the risk the authorities are taking with someone else's life.

There were some 130 intercountry adoptions in 2012-13. That is 102 young lives on which some administrator is making a life changing decision. We have a duty of care to apply the same rules which apply to CK and to Nicho and Margaret. We have to ensure that the adoptive parents are doing this for the right reasons—that they will love their baby as their own, and that they understand what they are doing and the reasons why. The child must always come first. That is what this legislation is all about. While I want the system to work for the best result, I do not want layers of bureaucracy killing it for prospective parents, we here need to ensure that our duty of care is observed. I support this legislation. I support adoption and the people who make this massive decision to ask another person to share their lives. Just like CK and Nicho and Margaret, there are decisions made and accepted. If those decisions are made with the right motivation the love of a lifetime together will follow.
Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (12:33): I rise to speak with delight on the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill. This bill has the ability to deliver incredible outcomes on an issue that impacts many people. This bill is for the parents that long to nurture a child and for a child that longs to be nurtured. Our government wants to make adoptions easier for Australians who yearn for a child and for children that face the uncertainty of being in an orphanage or out of home care. While many organisations do a wonderful job caring for children, I am sure we can all agree that a stable family is the best environment for a child's development and future. Prospective parents invest much time and energy in what can be a long and emotional journey. The decision to adopt is a decision most would not have come to lightly. In many cases, the decision is made after an already anxious time in their lives—family planning issues and unsuccessful and heartbreaking IVF attempts.

The decision by our Prime Minister in December 2013 to reform adoption by the end of this year was a very welcomed one, for many. In June, Australians celebrated National Adoption Awareness Week and founding member Deborra-Lee Furness said:

We always knew we needed a champion and a leader within government to bring about change, so let's aim for the top. I'm thrilled to have the Prime Minister on board.

I recognise and appreciate all the work Deborra-Lee and her husband, Hugh Jackman, have undertaken for this very important issue. The Prime Minister's commitment led to the report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Intercountry Adoption, which was released in April this year. Following the receipt of more than 100 submissions, the report recognised many deficiencies and shortcomings that impede the process of adoptions. There are protections and safeguards that must be adhered to, to ensure that adoption will provide a genuinely safe and loving home; however, there is no need to delay the process once this has been established and both countries have come to agreement. By the time the adoption process has been finalised, in many cases taking years, families are eager to be united without further delay. There is a gamut of red tape that exists around intercountry adoption that has caused much complexity and frustration. This bill is a start to the process of unravelling and alleviating the unnecessary parts of that red tape.

In 2005, I had the pleasure of being a committee member on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services. Led by the now Speaker of the House, the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop, the committee conducted an inquiry into the adoption of children from overseas after reviewing the 2003-2004 annual report of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Intercountry adoption is now the main form of adoption in Australia. At the time of this committee inquiry, we found that there had been a sharp decline in the number of adoptions in Australia within the last 40 years. The peak of adoptions was in 1971-72, with over 9,000 adoptions, however in 2003-2004 there were only 73 adoptions. The particular emphasis on that inquiry was on the inconsistencies between state and territory approval processes for overseas adoptions. Throughout that inquiry it became evident that the issue was far more complex than we could have imagined and there were a number of key recommendations made to the government at the conclusion. Given my close involvement and exposure to this issue I am so pleased to see a real attempt being made to strengthen Australia's intercountry adoption process.

It is pleasing for me to see that our Prime Minister and this government is continuing with its commitment to ease the burden associated with the process of overseas adoptions. Families
want to be brought together as soon as possible. This government wants to make it easier to adopt when it is in the best interest of the child. We want to improve the process without the mistakes of the past. Since 1 July 2007, adoptions finalised outside Australia were provided a specific pathway for children adopted under full Hague convention arrangements to apply for Australian citizenship. This bill will facilitate the grant of Australian citizenship to children adopted by Australian citizens under bilateral adoption arrangements between Australia and countries not party to The Hague convention on intercountry adoption. This will enable children adopted under bilateral arrangements to arrive in their new homeland as Australian citizens, such as those adopted from South Korea and Taiwan and families currently awaiting finalisations of adoptions from Ethiopia.

Amending the Australian Citizenship Act so that a child will come to Australia as an Australian citizen will not only eliminate some of the time delay but give a sense of 'reality' and authenticity to the relationship after the many years of completing documents, interviews, letters and emails. A child would have mixed emotions arriving to a new future, but imagine the euphoria of the parent and child meeting and being welcomed by their country. On 5 May this year, the Prime Minister and the Attorney General announced the commencement of a new intercountry adoption program with South Africa. With this arrangement now in place, I am sure there will be many Australians who will pursue this path.

The many separate and different eligibility criteria in our states and territories can also present challenges. In May this year, COAG agreed to a national system for intercountry adoptions, which in itself will make a significant difference to the process. The Commonwealth will act swiftly with our states and territories to put this measure in place by early 2015. As the government believes this is an important issue, it will fund the cost of a national approach.

As a mother, I know how important and precious children are and how blessed I am to have them. I hope they realise how blessed they are to be part of a loving family. If I am able to assist others in having this same experience then I will be glad that I was able to contribute to that. I thank the Prime Minister for having the fortitude to encourage and pave the way for this to occur.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry) (12:39): I rise today to speak to the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014. Last year, the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, teamed up with adoption activist Deborra-Lee Furness and her husband, Hugh Jackman, to announce coming changes to make it easier to adopt children locally and abroad within a year. Prime Minister Abbott announced that initial changes would be made to ensure no unnecessary delays for families who have adopted from countries where Australia has bilateral adoption agreements. Today, this bill has come to fruition, and a nation of parents-to-be celebrates.

This bill will streamline access to citizenship for children adopted by Australian citizens through bilateral arrangements made by Australia with specific countries. The proposed amendments will mean that adopted children from these countries will no longer require a visa to enter Australia. They will instead be immediately eligible to apply for, and be granted, Australian citizenship once the adoption is finalised overseas. At present, children adopted under bilateral arrangements require a passport from the home country and an Australian adoption visa to travel to Australia. This imposes additional complexity and cost on the
adopting families. Under the amendments to be made by this bill, children will be able to be granted citizenship as soon as the adoption is finalised. They will then be able to travel to Australia on an Australian passport, with their new families, as Australian citizens.

Previously, only countries that had signed up to The Hague convention on intercountry adoption would yield an automatic adoption order when arriving in Australia. For countries with which Australia has a bilateral adoption agreement but which are not formal signatories to The Hague convention, the process is much more complicated and risks court delays to have these adoptions recognised in Australia. Currently, after a couple has completed the adoption process in the child's home country, there can sometimes be lengthy court processes at the Australian end—a 12-month wait is typical.

The bill will also ensure improvements to the process for families adopting children from Taiwan and South Korea. In 2012-13, 40 per cent of intercountry adoptions were from Taiwan and South Korea. In June 2012, Ethiopia closed its intercountry adoption program with Australia. Under this program, Australian couples have adopted more than 600 children. These changes will also benefit those who have not finalised their Ethiopian adoption. We have now opened a new overseas adoption program with South Africa, and we are also commencing discussions with seven other countries about possible new overseas adoption programs. As of late 2013, Australia has intercountry adoption programs with 13 countries: Bolivia, Chile, China, Columbia, Fiji, Hong Kong, India, Lithuania, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand. Programs with Bolivia, Fiji and India are currently on hold due to a decision either by the Attorney-General or by the relevant overseas authority.

Adoption in Australia is a big issue. Adoption rates in Australia have been falling since the 1980s. In 1988-89, 1,501 adoptions occurred across Australia. In 2012-13, only 339 adoptions occurred. In 1988-89, 244 of the 1,501 adoptions were intercountry. In 2012-13, 129 of the 339 adoptions were intercountry. There has been a 77 per cent decline in adoptions in Australia over the last 25 years and only two in five adoptions were intercountry—and it is not from lack of trying. Adoptive parents in Australia are dying for the chance to share their home and heart with a child, but the process is just too difficult. Each country has a different set of rules and set of hoops to jump through—whether it is age restrictions, language barriers, living in the country for a length of time or even stopping any kind of reproductive program you may have previously used. It has become a heart-breakingly difficult situation and children are missing out on opportunities for safe homes, loving families and better lives. If they have endured all that and succeeded then, at the end, they should not have to worry about entry to the county due to bureaucratic rigmarole of a visa. The government wants to remove the red tape and reduce the delays that do not benefit anyone. We need to create opportunities for families that can offer a better life and a safe and loving home to children who do not have parents.

In my electorate of Paterson, I know of these hurdles from listening to my constituents who have come to me to assist them. I would like to talk about constituents like Dr Samuel Vidler, who, with his wife and two young sons, moved to China to do voluntary medical work with the community and with orphaned children. Whilst working there he came into contact with an abandoned little girl, Maggie. She was 18 months old, with stage four HIV-AIDS. She was very unwell and had been abandoned in the city of Hanzhong. Due to the fear of this condition in the community, his family took her under a foster care arrangement, believing
she had only six months of life remaining. One and a half years later, with good medical care and the love of a family, her immune functions miraculously returned to normal levels. Maggie is now a three-year-old girl and her blood tests show that the HIV had become undetectable. She learnt English and was fluent in both English and Chinese. She was intelligent, happy, and loved by the only family she had ever known.

The Vidler family's time in China was also coming to an end, and they wanted to return home. The family quite understandably wanted to make Maggie's living arrangements with them permanent by adopting her. Over the 18 months she had stayed with them, the family had grown to love her as one of their own. She was, and I quote Dr Vidler, 'an integral part of the family,' and he could 'not imagine her now being sent to another country, to another family.' The adoption should have been relatively straightforward. Dr Vidler and his wife are both doctors and able to give their foster daughter good medical care. They were financially sound and had a strong marriage and family base. They sent in an application to the China Centre of Adoption Affairs in Beijing and it was accepted.

However, due to the tricky red tape laws in Australia, Dr Vidler was facing some difficult hurdles. The Australian government would only consider an application for citizenship once the adoption was completed. But the Chinese government would only allow the adoption to go through if the accepting country had guaranteed to accept them. The Australian embassy in Beijing acknowledged that once an adoption is complete, they would be willing to view her application. This bureaucratic process was tearing a family in two and putting a little girl's world in jeopardy. It was causing undue stress on a family who had only wanted to help an abandoned, sick little girl to stay in good health and have a great future in front of her. Red tape was strangling what should have been a relatively straightforward procedure.

Dr Vidler contacted my office for my assistance in the matter. I was only too happy to represent the family to the then minister for immigration, Chris Evans. Luckily, he saw the situation as it was, and it was fixed. I am glad to say that Maggie now is living and thriving in Australia with her adopted family. However, it should not have taken a ministerial representation to have the matter resolved. Both countries were happy for the adoption to occur but bureaucratic difficulties delayed this child's happiness with her family in her new home country. It is time to get rid of this ridiculous red tape.

Sadly, it is not the first time I have heard about bureaucratic issues when adoption is being discussed. Adoption is a deeply personal and emotional journey, it does not mix well with rules and regulations that only serve to delay and obstruct a happy ending.

Recently, I represented another constituent who was going through the same painful process. Her name is Hayley Hoawerth. I last spoke to Hayley, then known as Hayley Tull, in 1997. At this time Hayley was fighting a battle with Wilms tumour. This affliction required surgery to remove the tumour and then up to 72 weeks of chemotherapy to ensure the cancer was completely cleared. It therefore took a toll on Hayley's body. Hayley was a tower of strength throughout this, and I am happy to report that she is still with us today, happy and healthy.

Now married, Hayley Hoawerth moved to Fiji in October 2012 as her husband Shane had a work opportunity there. During this time, some Fijian friends asked if the Hoawerths would like to adopt their soon-to-be-born baby, as they already had a child and could not afford another. They also did not want to send the unborn child to an orphanage as they knew the
Hoawerths could give the child everything she ever needed. The Hoawerths received their daughter, Navaia, when she was two days old, and has been in their permanent care ever since. At 20 months old, they applied to the court and received full guardianship. In May this year they were granted full adoption rights through the court, where she took their surname and was issued a new birth certificate stating the Hoawerths were the official parents of Navaia. They obtained her Fiji passport with the new name and applied for a new Australian tourist visa, as they travel home regularly on holiday. They are now attempting to get permanent residency for Navaia. They received advice from another couple from Australia, who adopted a child four years ago in the same circumstances. This couple said to gain permanent residency for their child they obtained a tourist visa and travelled to Australia and applied for permanent residency under a child visa. Residency was granted within a few months.

The Hoawerths were planning on doing this but after reading her old tourist visa, they discovered there was a new condition denying them another visa whilst in Australia. They asked for my assistance in this matter. All they had done was offer a new life for an unwanted child, and assisted their Fijian friends with an emotional burden. Now they were stuck between the two countries due to the red tape of visa conditions. Thankfully, I can now report that common sense has prevailed. After discussing the situation with immigration officials, Navaia was granted an unconditional tourism visa in July. The family can now come home and lodge a child visa application during their next holiday. It does not make sense that good people who have good hearts are being denied the freedom of moving on with their new lives and the new addition to their family. It is not an easy decision to adopt a child; it is life-changing.

I went through this with one of my own electorate office staff and his wife. They were struggling with a decision to adopt, particularly via the intercountry adoption program. They were considering this option after seven traumatic years of trying to have a baby naturally. They shared with me the frustration and desperation they faced and the heartbreaking decision of having to choose between IVF treatment and going down the adoption process. While they would have loved to have done both, the reality was that the intercountry adoption route was littered with diabolical bureaucracy, an undetermined length of time waiting, and astronomical costs. It meant they had to choose the IVF option.

While they have been blessed recently with the birth of their first son, Ethan, they have expressed their hope to still go down the adoption path in light of the Abbott government's announcement about positive changes to the intercountry adoption program. When I heard about their struggles with the process of adopting both here in Australia and overseas, I found it unfathomable that such couples are finding it so hard to adopt, given their capacity to love and that there are so many children around the world crying out for loving parents. I hope and I pray that these changes will make the processes easier for such loving parents to adopt as many children as they need and they can, because they are parents who want to share their love and provide a stable home. This is not a hard bill to support. It is common sense. Let's support those who want to support the unwanted children of the world. I commend this bill to House.

**Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (12:53):** I rise today, following the very eloquent words of my colleague Mr Baldwin, to also speak in support of the Australian Citizenship Amendment
(Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014. A fundamental duty of government is to reduce the burdens and bureaucracy on individuals as they go about trying to live their lives. This government is continuing that important task of making life simpler for the people of this country through reducing red tape, and I welcome this bill as another example of how we are trying to make life simpler through reducing that red tape when it comes to intercountry adoption.

Adoption is a wonderful gift because it allows couples to become parents for the very first time, or it allows couples to complete their family through adoption. It is also a wonderful gift for those children who are being adopted. It provides them with a stable family. It provides them with a new life of opportunity ahead of them, a life in Australia with all of the wonderful things that that involves. So when members of our community are trying to map their way through a complicated maze of government regulation both here in Australia and overseas, it is even more important for us as legislators to look to simplify matters as far as possible. We all know the emotional cost that those who are seeking to adopt go through, but the added burden of red tape and regulation makes that so much more difficult.

Like members across the chamber, I receive correspondence from our community and from those people who have embarked upon the journey to adopt and so fulfil their life's goal to become parents. Less and less are those people able to adopt domestically. We have seen a rapid decline in the number of children available. In part, this is a good thing because this means that there are fewer parents who feel unable to care for those children. However, for those yearning to be parents and yearning to take care of children this does diminish their options. So some couples choose to look overseas. This is continuing a strong and proud tradition here in Australia of helping those less fortunate than ourselves and of looking around the world in order to do that. In choosing to adopt a child from a less fortunate place around the world and bring them to our lucky country, our strong and prosperous nation, they are making a significant investment not only in that child but also in the future potential of our great nation.

The bill before us today will help to reduce some of the bureaucratic hurdles that make it more difficult for Australian citizens wishing to adopt children from abroad. This bill acknowledges a fundamental tenet that, no matter where a child is born, a child of Australian parents should be an Australian citizen. When an Australian couple is blessed with the opportunity to have a baby, they welcome that baby into their family and also into our wider Australian family as an Australian citizen. Likewise, through our adoption of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, Australian citizens who adopt children from countries that are signatories of the convention are also able to welcome their children as full citizens of our country. However, this is not the case for intercountry adoption, and it is certainly not the case where Australia has a bilateral agreement with a particular country but they are not a signatory to the Hague Convention.

Intercountry adoption has been undergoing a global decline. In fact, we have seen a decline of more than 50 per cent since the global peak in 2004, with adoptions to Australia falling from 434 in 2004-05 to 129 in 2012-13. Thankfully, this decline is partly for positive reasons, as with global development—often supported by Australian aid and trade agreements—families in some countries have been less in need of giving up their children for adoption. Yet
the decline in intercountry adoptions has also surely been influenced by the complex processes, high fees and extended waiting times for families who wish to adopt.

Through this bill, adoption of children from countries that are not party to the Hague Convention but with which Australia has a bilateral agreement should become a little bit easier by granting Australian citizenship to children adopted from these countries. To date, this will benefit citizens and adopted children from three countries: Ethiopian, South Korea and Taiwan. I encourage the honourable Attorney-General to continue discussions with further suitable partner countries around the world so that this might be available with other countries as well.

Once the adoption process for a child from Ethiopia, South Korea or Taiwan has been successfully completed, these adopted children can only receive a passport from their birth country and have to apply for an Australian migration visa to enter Australia under the previous law. This bill, though, will allow children to be granted Australian citizenship on adoption and they will be able to fly to Australia for the first time with an Australian passport when they come with their new family. In delivering these changes to make it easier for children from overseas to be adopted and to grow up here in Australia, the best interests of children must be paramount. This legislation, though, will continue to ensure that all proper and probative standards and safeguards continue to be in place to protect children.

I am sure the Attorney-General will continue to work with COAG partners to develop a new, improved national system for intercountry adoption. Any future bilateral arrangements that Australia enters into must also ensure the requirements of the Hague convention are met. However, to make the process as easy as possible for parents, there is no reason why adoptions from countries with which we have bilateral agreements should not be recognised in the same way as adoptions in Hague convention countries.

I, therefore, commend this bill to the House because I believe that it is our responsibility to streamline the adoption process as much as possible for families adopting a child and bringing them to a new life in Australia. This small but very important change to the intercountry adoption program will be an important part of the wider government strategy for helping our citizens wishing to adopt while continuing to protect the rights and interests of children, in accordance with our international obligations. I commend the bill to the House and thank those in the House, both on this side of the chamber and those opposite, for their support of this bill.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (13:01): I rise today in support of the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014. The bill amends the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 to allow a person adopted outside Australia by an Australian citizen to acquire Australian citizenship in accordance with a bilateral arrangement between Australia and another country. Many members have spoken on this bill and have provided the details of the legislative framework. However, in essence, this bill provides Australian citizenship to adopted children of Australian parents. The adopted child will be able to travel to Australia as an Australian citizen without needing to obtain a passport from the home country or an adoption visa under the Migration Regulations 1994. The bill is compatible with human rights. It does not raise any human rights issues. Rather, for children adopted outside Australia by an Australian citizen, it will make their transition to a better life a whole lot
easier. It is also another commitment that this government is fulfilling to the Australian people.

On a personal level, I wanted to speak very briefly on this bill today as I have met a number of loving couples in my electorate who would have made wonderful parents. They wanted to offer their homes and were prepared to open up their hearts to a child who did not have a home and family. While many of these couples have waited years and have been disappointed, this legislation will assist others in their situation. Anything we can do to assist these couples is worthy, and this bill seeks to address some of the problems.

The other reason I wanted to participate in this debate today is that I also hope that by speaking on this bill and by raising awareness of the benefits of adoption we can start a conversation within the community and hopefully make adoption of children from within our own country also easier. I know this is an emotive issue; however, it is a conversation we should have.

This bill is about creating an entitlement to citizenship for the easier processing of children adopted under the Hague convention arrangements and under bilateral arrangements. As the Prime Minister has said:
The government wants to make it easier to adopt when it is in the best interests of the child.
The government announced in December 2013 that we would improve overseas adoption by the end of this year. We are delivering on that commitment. We have improved the process for families adopting from Taiwan and South Korea. We have considered a report by senior officials on options to reform overseas adoption. It was informed by more than 100 public submissions. We are running a new overseas adoption program with South Africa and are in discussion with seven other countries about the possibility of new overseas adoption programs.

I congratulate the minister and the Prime Minister. These amendments will reduce even more red tape when it comes to intercountry adoption. And I thank those couples willing to open up their homes and hearts to these children. Our community will be stronger for their efforts.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:05): As yet another contributor to this debate in considering a bill to change the Citizenship Act to streamline the process of intercountry adoption I really only rise to deliver a cautionary note in this area. Having lived overseas for a significant part of my pre-political life, I am a little bit cautious about this extremely complicated area of intercountry adoption. I have seen some of the source countries from where these children originate. There is a temptation, I think, in a very superficial way sometimes to visualise this as effectively an airlift out of the red zone for children who have no future in source countries. There is the general Western notion that we can offer them all a better life. I have no doubt that there is an incredible amount of love amongst recipient parents, who, in many cases, have explored every other option to no avail. It is encouraging to see at least in the Hague convention a genuine focus on identifying the best interests of the child. I also concede that probably the most frustrating thing for impassioned and well-meaning couples in a place such as Australia is the cost, wait and uncertainty around adopting a child.

But I wonder whether when we look back on and read this debate decades from now we might just feel that we skimmed over some of the more sensitive elements. They are ones that
are almost imponderable to us now, but we need to be extraordinarily cautious when we move minors—in most cases, infants—from one nation to another.

While we in this chamber have absolutely no doubt that by setting up bureaucratic protections we can ensure the best interests of the child, I want to make the simple point that that is not quite so simple to do in a number of source countries. I know that in some cases we are dealing with free democracies and fairly elaborate public service structures, where there can be some hope of that occurring; but that is not always the case. It is not always the case that we can be 100 per cent sure that this will be in the best interests of the child. We do not have to go much further than recent media reports about arrangements made between Thailand and Australia.

I am also concerned in essence that a judgement by an individual or by an official that this is an act of last resort may not always be the case. While it may well be written in the conventions and in the legislation that this should be an option of last resort, I am aware of two other things. I know first of all that we are nation that invests heavily in enabling couples to become families. We have probably the world's most generous IVF arrangements and we are seeing an expansion in surrogacy as well. I understand that that does not suit everyone. Adoption plays an incredibly important role there. But I just wonder whether decades from now we will look back and be absolutely certain that each one of these arrangements, with all the information that we have before us right now, would have been in the child's best interest.

If there is one sense that I have deep in my heart, it is that a decade or two from now we will have a very, very different view about the importance of children remaining with birth parents, with the extended families and within their own cultures. I think it is a prescient but also cautionary note that we need to remember that in one of the wealthiest countries in the world we should never assume that, simply because we have more resources here, a child's life will automatically be better. I have got no doubt also that there is also an enormous selection bias at play, where those children who have come to live in Australia will almost always say that that has been an enriching and a better experience for having done it. But we need to remember that there is also a family at home. There is also an extended family unit in that developing economy, which not only remains silent but is almost completely disengaged from this process.

So I appreciate the efforts here to simplify and streamline to make sure that these are adoptions of last resort, but I do remain very concerned that that child who moves from one country to another leaves behind, like a furrow in a field, a gap can never be filled. It can never be filled not simply because there may have been in this case no direct biological first degree parent but because we have made an assessment that their life will be better somewhere else. We have made an assessment that that child does not necessarily belong as part of a greater extended family simply because at that temporal moment in time we could not actually find the appropriate people to fulfil the role.

I am concerned that there will be, through expanding these networks, a greater and greater demand upon these officials in source countries to set up these arrangements and to ensure that they occur. In some ways, the great risk of coming up with a system that has less cost, less wait and less uncertainty is that we reduce that window of opportunity to ensure that this is absolutely in the child's best interest. I have got an enormous amount of faith in the people who are often working in very, very uncertain arrangements in difficult economies; but I think
we just need to for a moment release ourselves from this notion that we are airlifting children to a better future and to a better life, because that is a distinctly Western way of examining this problem.

I commend the fact that we are part of the convention and I commend the fact that we are identifying one-to-one strong bilateral relationships with countries where we will be engaging this process, but I would make that cautionary and concluding note that we must never, ever forget that we leave behind a family unit in these source countries in many cases. While our instantaneous assessment now is that the child is better off, I would love to know that that family unit and the broader culture is also better off having participated in inter-country adoptions.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (13:11): This is an issue that is close to the hearts of many women and men in Australia today. It is a proud moment for me, as a representative of the people of Solomon and the Northern Territory, to be able to stand here in this parliament today to debate this very important piece of legislation.

While I am not at liberty to identify them by name, I would like to dedicate this speech to the couples that I have spoken to during my time as a local member who have been pushing for changes to the rules surrounding overseas adoption. While they have not been substantial in number, the passion, the emotion and also the very good sense that these people have brought to this discussion has been both powerful and compelling. I strongly emphasise with their predicament and with their determination to have a family. The Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill will go some way towards simplifying the overseas adoption process for them and for other couples in my electorate.

Children give life to families and give enormous personal and collective joy, on an individual basis as well as to couples and families more broadly. In recent months, I have been reminded of this. Our son and his wife just had a baby, Evie. She has brought amazing joy to the family and is quite extraordinary. Evie has been brought into a loving, stable family with lots of extended family to dote over her and spoil her. But the same cannot be said for countless other children who have been born both overseas and in Australia.

There are pockets of tremendous disadvantage in the Northern Territory, particularly in some remote communities. There are places that are very tough for the adults that live there, let alone for the children. Notwithstanding these challenges, every child has a right to be brought up in a loving, supportive family. It follows that parents have a responsibility to provide the type of environment where children can thrive and prosper.

This government has indicated a willingness to support parents in providing the best opportunities for their children and there is a mutual obligation for that. This is the balance that federal and territory governments are trying to strike with their policies as they relate to the delivery of welfare and school attendance. It is about protecting the interests of children. I say this because I think it is important that this government cannot be accused of turning a blind eye to disadvantage in its own backyard while legislating to support children from overseas.

But today's legislation is focused specifically around improving the processes around overseas adoption and, as the Prime Minister said in his second reading speech, for too long adoption has been in the too-hard basket. For too long it has been too hard to adopt and for
too long it has been a policy no-go zone. As I alluded to earlier, one of the greatest rewards of being a member of parliament is that I am able to in a small way be involved in helping people improve their lives and be involved in making decisions that have a positive impact within families. In opposition the Prime Minister identified a raft of red tape within the overseas adoption process that created a barrier to the smooth facilitation of child adoption. Already the government has improved the processes for families adopting from Taiwan and South Korea, a new overseas adoption program has been opened with South Africa and discussions have already commenced with seven other countries.

As part of the process of enabling overseas adoption in Australia the Prime Minister has commissioned a interdepartmental committee report. The committee is charged with identifying options for implementing reforms within Australia. Chaired by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the committee has senior representatives from the Attorney-General's Department, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection as well as the Department of Social Services. I recommend anybody considering adopting a child from overseas, or with an interest in this subject, read this report. It is well researched, informative and takes an eyes wide open approach to this complex and sometimes emotive issue.

In the process of removing overseas adoptions from the too-hard basket, the government is well aware of some of the pitfalls that could potentially derail trust in this scheme and damage its reputation permanently. For instance, Australian authorities suspended the overseas adoption program with India as a result of child-trafficking allegations. It is a given that Australia requires that all programs be ethical and meet the standards and principles set by The Hague convention. This was ratified in 1993 and underpins the framework under which overseas adoptions have taken place over the past two decades. At its core the two key principles are: firstly, that the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration in all convention countries and, secondly, that adoption is subsidiary to care by family, and intercountry adoption is subsidiary to domestic adoption.

The report identifies that the practice of legally adopting a child from another country was first practised widely by the United States as a humanitarian response to the enormous number of children from Germany, Italy and Greece orphaned during World War II. In Australia it was not until the Vietnam War and the resultant war in Cambodia that overseas adoptions were practised in significant numbers. The report says that in the final days of the Vietnam War the Australian government authorised two dramatic airlifts of about 280 children from orphanages in Saigon to be adopted by Australian families. This was part of the US-led initiative known as Operation Babylift that saw over 2,500 Vietnamese orphans removed from their war torn country.

While a number of factors have contributed to a recent decline in the number of overseas adoptions worldwide, including strengthening economies in the South-East Asian region, the number of overseas adoptions in Australia is, in comparison to other developed nations, relatively low. I say this based on the discussions I had with the constituents I referred to earlier. They were unable to have children naturally or through IVF and found themselves being stymied by red tape during the overseas adoption process. This was extremely frustrating for them and, speaking generally, they felt frustrated and angry at a bureaucracy that put up roadblocks where there should not have been any.
Throughout the 1980s the number of overseas adoptions peaked at 420 and in the 1990s it dropped to a relatively constant figure of around 250. Australian ratification of The Hague convention in 1998 and an increase in adoptions from China saw numbers increase again, peaking at around 434 in the 2004-05 financial year, but we saw the number decline to 129 in the 2012-13 financial year.

The report says that the number of adoptions by Australians of overseas children is among the lowest of any developed country. That was the point I made earlier. It says the proportion of children adopted with special needs, such as being older or members of sibling groups or having disabilities or medical conditions, is exceptionally low compared with those in other developed countries. Numerically, rather than as a percentage of the population, it does certainly appear that Australia is behind the eight ball when it comes to overseas adoptions. In 2010, for instance, there were 222 intercountry adoptions in Australia. This compared to 655 in Sweden, a country with less than half of our population. The Netherlands, with about 16 million people, had 697 adoptions. Canada, with 35 million people, has an overseas adoption rate almost nine times that of Australia. Americans adopt by far the most children from overseas—with 12,149 adoptions in 2010.

As I said earlier, improving economic conditions in developing countries is one reason identified in the report for a substantial reduction over the past decade or so in adoptions. With the decline in Australia of around 60 per cent between 2004 and 2010 on a par with other Western nations, but by any measure the figure is, as I said, still pretty low. In my jurisdiction of the Northern Territory, the number has increased from one in the 2009-10 financial year to nine in 2011-12 and to 10 in the 2012-13 financial year. This was in part as a result of amendments made by the Northern Territory government that meant children born overseas could be issued with a full Australian birth certificate. Probably, the key recommendation in the interdepartmental report—and this is what we are discussing today—is recommendation (2), which enables children from non-Hague signatory countries with which Australia has a bilateral arrangement to obtain citizenship in their country of origin, where one or both of the adoptive parents is an Australian citizen.

At present children adopted by Australian citizens under bilateral arrangements require a passport from their home country and Australian adoption visa to travel to Australia. As the Prime Minister has already said, this imposes an additional complexity and cost on the adopting families. This bill will allow children to be granted citizenship as soon as the adoption is completed they will then be able to travel to Australia on an Australian passport with the new families as Australian citizens. It goes without saying that Australia will be very careful about with whom it strikes bilateral arrangements and that these agreements have in place the standards and safeguards that ensure the process is transparent, open and accountable.

The government does not pretend that the amendment today is a silver bullet that will certainly lead to overseas adoption rates soaring, but we are of the view that, if we do not start somewhere, nothing will improve. This legislation is a step forward and not the complete journey; as the government, we know there is still more to be done. But through the passage of this bill the Australian community can see for themselves the benefits of having a united government with a clear, coherent narrative as opposed to one that is divided, lacks focus and cannot wait to get out of office. Government is about helping people and helping the country.
I think both those boxes are ticked with this amendment. The Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill will help to give life to families and give life to neighbourhoods and communities. It is impossible to underestimate the pleasure that children can bring—watching them develop from infancy to childhood through their teen years to adulthood and eventually having their own families. It is with great pleasure that I commend this legislation to the House.

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (13:26): Of all the many policies governments are called to deal with, those dealing with the lives and welfare of children—the most vulnerable group in our society—must surely be amongst the most important. Children everywhere deserve a safe and secure home environment. However, it is a sad reality that in some countries, for a range of complex social, cultural or economic reasons, there are children who are unable to be cared for by their parents, extended families or anyone else and who have no possibility of growing up in a family environment in their country of birth. For some of these children, intercountry adoption might be the only way in which they will have the opportunity to be part of a secure and loving family and to have a better chance at a better life.

Intercountry adoption is a complex and sensitive matter for all parties concerned. And a decision to remove a child from its country of birth, and possibly in some instances from its birth parents, is not one that the Australian government believes should ever be taken lightly. Nevertheless, we have, and do, support international adoption arrangements made under the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, which has established safeguards to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child and which offers eligible, caring families in Australia and elsewhere the opportunity to adopt an overseas-born child and provide it with a family, a home and a future he or she may never otherwise have.

Unfortunately, and for too long now, significant barriers have faced Australian families wanting to adopt from overseas. Inconsistent rules, high costs and lengthy waiting periods are common; so much so that they have been found to deter many people who would like to adopt a child from even starting the adoption process. In recognising that the processes required bringing together those children from overseas who legitimately need a safe and loving home, and those Australians who dream of providing that home, have been overburdened with inconsistency and complex red tape, the Prime Minister announced in December 2013 that the government would simplify overseas adoption by the end of this year. At this point I want to recognise the personal commitment to this issue by our Prime Minister. By removing those bureaucratic requirements and delays, which serve little real purpose and benefit no-one but simply add to the complexity and costs faced by adopting families, the government wants to make it easier to adopt when such action is clearly agreed by all parties to be in the best interests of the child.

Australia’s overarching requirement of any potential partner country willing to participate in an intercountry adoption arrangement with us is that the country essentially meet ethical and legal framework standards and safeguards equivalent to those required under the Hague convention, to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child. In those cases where a country is not a signatory—
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member will have leave to continue his remarks.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Live Animal Exports

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (13:30): It is with great alarm that people in my electorate have learned the government is considering exempting live animal exports to Saudi Arabia from the requirements of Australia's exporter supply chain assurance system, or ESCAS. The port of Fremantle handles a significant volume of the live export trade and the people of Fremantle, as well as the people throughout metro and regional Western Australia, are very conscious of the potential for mistreatment and cruelty in an industry that crudely transports millions of animals to a poorly regulated fate. The ESCAS itself is certainly not perfect, but it is the absolute bare minimum that should be required. Unfortunately, this government has no interest in animal welfare. When we talk about trucks and ships packed with animals forced to make long journeys of suffering en route to slaughter in conditions that too often amount to wanton cruelty and torture, this government sees only dollar signs.

Lyn White of Animals Australia has noted:

There are not only no animal welfare laws in Saudi Arabia, there are no animal welfare regulations in their slaughterhouses.

... ... ...

... it is irresponsible that the Abbott government is opening new and risky markets at a time regulations are failing in existing markets and with horrendous consequences for animals.

RSPCA Australia's CEO, Heather Neil, has said:

Giving special consideration and exemptions for one country is a slippery slope back to the horrors we saw in Indonesian abattoirs in 2011—what's to stop others from bullying Australia into the same thing?

The vast majority of the Australian community want to see animal welfare regulations made stronger and applied rigorously and consistently.

Lea, Sergeant Thomas Henry 'Buddy'

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (13:31): It is with great sadness that I advise the House of the passing of the former Sergeant Thomas Henry Lea, better known as Buddy. Buddy lost his fight with lung cancer at the Hervey Bay hospital recently. He served 35 years in the Australian Army and saw service in Borneo, Malaya and Vietnam. Buddy was one of the legends of Long Tan. Known for rescuing one of his mates during the battle, he was shot three times on 18 August 1966. His former commander, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith (retired), described Buddy as 'an excellent soldier', saying:

... he was very brave and one of the most loyal people I've ever come across.

Buddy was a member of D Company 6RAR and it is only appropriate that they provided an honour guard at his service, which was attended by over a thousand mourners at Hervey Bay. Affectionately known, Buddy will be remembered fondly for his booming laugh and the way in which he lit up a room.

Of course, he is a great loss to his family. He is survived by his son, Barry, his daughter, Meisha, and his grandchildren. While my electorate of Hinkler has lost one of its most
respected and well known war heroes, it is also a great loss to our community. Buddy was very well known in Hervey Bay for his work with local school children and the advice he provided about what it meant to him to be an Australian service person. Buddy adorned the cover of a recent white pages with Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith, and it is a great photo that is left in his memory. Buddy Lea, we will not forget you. May you rest in peace.

McEwen Electorate: Sunbury Community Kitchen

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (13:33): Two weeks ago I attended the first birthday celebration of the Rotary Club of Sunbury's Community Family Kitchen. The Sunbury community kitchen was started by Marianne and Neil Williams in September 2013 with just 10 people. Now, one year later, the kitchen feeds more than 140 community members and has dozens of volunteers helping out. The program collaborates closely with the Rotary Club of Sunbury, the Salvation Army and Second Bite.

The Sunbury community kitchen has such a warm and social atmosphere, it is more than just a place to find a meal when you find yourself struggling with what life throws at you. The community spirit that Marianne, Neil and the team have gathered there is inspiring to everyone. Even some of the community members who have received meals at the kitchen have been inspired to give back to the community, including one particular patron who collected blankets and sleeping bags and personally delivered them to the homeless in the city of Melbourne. Marianne, Neil and several volunteers and patrons all shared stories with me about how the community kitchen has really brought people out of their shells, bringing a sense of community and family back into the lives of those who are doing it a bit tough. There was one young couple who were even celebrating the 80th wedding anniversary at the community kitchen with their daughter.

I want to commend Marianne and Neil for starting this fantastic initiative in our community of Sunbury. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to the dozens of volunteers who make the community kitchen what it is today. I look forward to supporting and working with the team at the Rotary Club of Sunbury Community Family Kitchen for many years to come. Again, happy birthday!

Port Adelaide Football Club

Hindmarsh Electorate: Sport

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (13:34): I rise today to recognise the achievements of a number of sporting clubs. Football finals are in full swing. Although my beloved Port Adelaide went down in two heartbreaking losses over the weekend—one in the AFL preliminary final to Hawthorn and yesterday in the South Australian Football final—they can be congratulated for their fine season. So I want to put on the record my congratulations to President David Koch, CEO Keith Thomas and the many staff and supporters of the Port Adelaide Football Club for their 2014 season.

At a local level, in my seat of Hindmarsh, I want to congratulate the Morphettville Park Roos, who won their women's football league division 1 premiership. They defeated West Adelaide, another good local club, in a fine game. I also attended one of the games at the Morphettville Park Football Club and spoke to club members. I look forward to continuing to support the club in 2015.
I want to acknowledge the efforts of a number of other local football clubs in Hindmarsh. The Seaton Ramblers had their end-of-season presentation last Friday. It was a fine evening. I want to congratulate all the award winners from the club. The previous week, I attended the Plympton Bulldogs junior football club presentation. A number of people have said it is a great family club, and I can see why from their presentation. Both clubs are community focused, with dedicated volunteers, and their committees do a great job. Finally, well done to the Henley Sharks on their season, losing to eventual premiers Goodwood Saints, and to the Sacred Heart Old Collegians, who made the div 2 grand final. Next year, hopefully, like the Port Adelaide Football Club, they will all win the premiership!

Ardler, Mr Garry

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:36): It is with great sadness that I pay tribute and respect to Garry Ardler, a true leader of the Indigenous community in Kingsford Smith, who tragically passed away on 4 September at the age of 48. Garry was a champion footballer who captained the 1991 La Perouse Panthers team to victory in the South Sydney junior league grand final over the Coogee Randwick Wombats. He was a representative rugby player and a champion surfer. His nickname in the community was 'Rat', which derived from the fact that he was known in his younger years as 'the water rat'. He was never out of the water and loved surfing in the local community.

When Garry got married he moved with his family to the south of Queensland to raise his two sons, but he quickly came back home to the people of La Perouse. He was the coordinator of the Aboriginal men's group in La Perouse, and he was pivotal in achieving an agreement between the Guriwal Aboriginal Corporation, Eastern Sydney Medicare, the local land council and the Cancer Council to improve health outcomes for people in the La Perouse community.

Garry was passionate about men's health issues and would encourage those who had a natural inclination to keep to themselves not only to talk about their wellbeing but to take positive steps to improve their health. He was a gentle giant with a love of life.

I last saw Garry at NAIDOC Week celebrations at the Prince of Wales Hospital. I offer my heartfelt condolences to Garry's boys, Mitcham and Luke, to Paula and Raechael, to his mother, Sandra, and to Rodney and Gayle. May he rest in peace. (Time expired)

Public Transport

WYATT ROY (Longman) (13:38): I take this opportunity to congratulate the Queensland state government for passing on in full the carbon tax savings when it comes to public transport. For the first time in the state's history, we will see a reduction in public transport fares. Commuters in my electorate—and I have a big commuter belt—heading to the city for work will see a five per cent reduction on their public transport fares for the first time ever.

I think it is important that we outline the difference between this side of politics and the other side of politics when it comes to public transport. When the state LNP government came to the power, the Labor government over the previous five years had increased public transport fares year in, year out by 15 per cent. The state government committed to halving those fare increases, and they delivered. For those commuting on a daily basis, every trip after their ninth trip was free. So they would get their trip home on the Friday afternoon free, and any public transport that they used across the weekend would be free. When you add up the
savings from those two measures plus the five per cent reduction that we are seeing today because the federal government abolished Labor's carbon tax, commuters in my electorate—people that do a daily commute from Caboolture to the city—will save $1,000 a year. That is a huge difference between this side of politics and that side of politics when it comes to cost of living—$1,000 for a daily commuter in my electorate. I am proud to be part of the team that is delivering on cost of living relief. (Time expired)

**Parramatta Electorate: Paint Parra REaD**

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (13:39): During the break, I attended Paint Parra REaD in Parramatta Mall, an event designed to encourage parents to read to their child every day from birth. The reading day was a free event organised by the Parramatta City Library and the Community Migrant Resource Centre with reading tents for young children. The program aims to raise awareness with local parents and carers about early literacy and the importance of reading to children from birth.

It was great to see the hardworking librarians from Parramatta Library out and about in the mall as well as Bilijana from the Community Migrant Resource Centre, whose work is always appreciated by all the children and their parents. Redsee the Readasaurus, in all his red glossary, made an appearance. He entertained the children and kept them company as they moved between the different reading tents.

We can never underestimate the power of literacy and reading, and I am so glad that events like these are available for free in my electorate of Parramatta. There are many people, of course, in my electorate whose young children are learning to read in more than one language: English and the language of their parents. It is particularly important for them and for all children that they begin that process of learning to read from day 1. You simply cannot replace the early years.

I read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* twice. Judging from the many food groups that he munched his way through, he was very well-named!

**Ryan Electorate: McIntyre Centre**

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (13:41): I rise today speak about a remarkable organisation in my electorate of Ryan, the McIntyre Centre. The McIntyre Centre does amazing work in our community by providing weekly therapeutic equestrian sessions for around 200 children and young people with disabilities. The centre provides a range of activities and support services for these young people and their families and also receives great support from the community.

I recently attended their Party in the Paddock, a big community day the centre holds every two years. This year was a very special year for the McIntyre Centre as they celebrated their 50th anniversary. More than 5,000 people joined the celebration this year, and I am delighted to announce that, as a result of the involvement of so many community groups, organisations and individuals, the centre reached their fundraising goal of $50,000. This is a wonderful result and will help support all the young people and their families to continue to thrive in their programs.

The McIntyre Centre is an integral part of our community and continues to enhance the lives of these special young people. They should be very proud of their achievements, and I wish them the very best for another successful 50 years. Congratulations to everyone involved.
Lalor Electorate: Schools

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:42): On Wednesday, 10 September, I attended Carranballac College in Point Cook in my electorate to help launch the Kids Teaching Kids program.

The week ran from Monday, 8 September through to Friday, 12 September. It was the largest Kids Teaching Kids event in Australia, with the entire college taking part in a week-long event running workshops on environmental science. The week saw over 60 classes of children actively teaching other students and included students from neighbouring schools: Point Cook Prep-Year 9 College, Wyndham Central College, Suzanne Cory High School and Manor Lakes College.

Carranballac College has successfully participated in the Kids Teaching Kids program for five years. The focus over this time has been on wetland science, including studying the sharp-tailed sandpiper, a migratory bird which flies between Point Cook and Werribee from Siberia each year, and returns.

In both 2013 and 2014 the Carranballac students and others have presented at the state KTK conference, and the story of these young scientists and their work was recently taught to a senior high school in Korea through an exchange program between teaching staff from Victoria and the Republic of Korea. Now these young scientists who were selected for their ability and enthusiasm for science will take their workshop to the KTK International Conference in Mandurah, Western Australia from Wednesday, 29 October to Friday, 31 October. I commend their work.

Bass Electorate: Defence

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:44): On 6 August, the Assistant Minister for Defence, Stuart Robert, visited the electorate of Bass to inspect Defence and research establishments. His visit to Scottsdale generated much positive commentary because the north-east of Tasmania is a neglected region that has suffered most from the damaging policies of Labor-Green governments in both Hobart and Canberra. Unfortunately, neither of my predecessors were successful in winning more defence work for the facility to ensure meaningful jobs and growth. I can assure the House that is something that I am working hard to change.

While in Tasmania, Minister Robert also held meetings with senior staff at the Centre for Food Innovation in Launceston. The work at this centre will lead to new developments that will enhance the performance of our troops as well as work with the food industry to develop and commercialise these ideas. We later inspected research facilities at the Australian Maritime College and saw leading edge work on underwater noise and ship design testing. Discussions were held on the potential for submarine science and technology collaboration between the college, the DSTO and Japan.

The minister's tour ended at the historic Paterson Barracks in Launceston, which date from 1830. I was delighted with the assistant minister's interest in these facilities and I look forward to working with him to further explore opportunities that benefit my local community and Australia's defence capability.
Dementia

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (13:45): September is Dementia Awareness Month in Australia. Right around the country people are campaigning for better support and greater awareness of this fast-growing disease. In my own electorate of Throsby, in Illawarra, the annual Memory Walk and Jog will be held on 12 October. I will be joining with my good friend and tireless Alzheimer's Australia campaigner, Tom Ward, who will be taking part in support of his wife, Margaret, who is one of the 332,000 sufferers in Australia today.

This morning I also had the honour of welcoming Libby Day and her crew into Canberra as they finished the last leg of their eight-day, 800-kilometre bike ride all the way from Melbourne to raise awareness for dementia research. Dementia is one of the fastest-growing diseases in Australia. Yet, there is not enough known about it and not enough research is going into its prevention and cures. By 2050, there are going to be close to one million people in Australia living with dementia. Right now, it is estimated that 1.2 million Australians are involved in the care of somebody with dementia. Against that background, it is an absolute outrage that the Abbott government has removed the dementia support payment which was supporting these carers. Their priorities are heading in the wrong direction. Dementia and Alzheimer's will touch every Australian over their lifetime either through a family member or personally, themselves. We need to do more to battle this insidious disease. (Time expired)

Page Electorate: Clarence Valley Business Excellence Awards

Mr HOGAN (Page) (13:47): I had the pleasure on Saturday night to attend the Clarence Valley Business Excellence Awards. There were well over 200 people in attendance. It was a great night and a great celebration of small businesses in our community. It was held at the golf club. I want to pay special tribute to Adam Gordon and his team and make a special mention of Erica Fletcher, who did an amazing job in organising the logistics of the evening; it was very well run. I also want to mention the major sponsor, the Daily Examiner—obviously these events cannot exist without sponsors.

I just want to run through very quickly some of the winners: Meredith and Scott at Kitchen to Table and Jeff and Robyn at I Scream won the two retail awards; Lisa and her team at Summerland Credit Union and Sam and his team at Mareeba Aged Care won the professional services awards; Janelle at Northland Coach and Travel won the tourism award; Ross and Gio at Harwood Marine won the trade and industry award and also the business of the year award; Anthony and David at Irons and Craig won the new business award; Vanessa and Scott at Willy Wagtails Kindergarten won the new business up to two years; CHESS Employment won the community and not-for-profit award; Sean Waite won apprentice of the year; Amy at Waves Fitness won the health award; and Fresh Dental Care won the workplace award.

Medicare

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:48): On 12 September, locals gathered in Eaglehawk community park for a Save Medicare Community Action Day. People signed petitions and wrote their own messages to the government about why this government's attack on Medicare is unacceptable. Many of the locals talked about their need for the local community health service, Bendigo Community Health, which was one of the earliest community health facilities built in this country.
At the rally, we had the Bendigo Community Health Services acting CEO, Anne Somerville, address the crowd. She said that in the Bendigo community health network, GPs provided over 6,000 appointments in August alone. Now whack that with an extra $7 and that is big bucks that this government will take out of the pockets of patients in Bendigo—this is from one network alone in one month. This service bulk bills. It supports the most vulnerable in our communities, the lowest socioeconomic and at-risk communities, in regional areas like Eaglehawk. The government should be doing what they can to partner with community health, they should not be attacking them. That is why people in Bendigo and in Eaglehawk stand opposed to this government's attacks on Medicare and health funding.

**Williams, Mrs Cynthia**

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (13:50): It is with sincere sadness that I speak of the death of Cynthia Williams. Cynthia was a prominent member of the Gladstone community. She was a much loved member of the Williams family, the Indigenous community of Gladstone and the Gladstone community as a whole. At 69 years of age, she sadly lost a long and courageous fight against cancer. She passed away on Wednesday, surrounded by friends and family. Cynthia was a shining light for the Gladstone regional community. She was never the one to dwell on the negatives. Cynthia will be remembered for her optimism, care and compassion for so many, young and old. She nurtured the development of countless young children—locally and outside the area—for 25 years. She worked in many schools in the Gladstone region.

Cynthia was named NAIDOC Elder of the Year just a few months ago at an event which I attended. It was a recognition that she so richly deserved and of which she was very proud indeed. I extend my sympathies to her husband, Cedric, her children and her grandchildren. A memorial service and interment was held earlier today in Gladstone. Unfortunately, I could not attend because of my duties here.

**Griffith Electorate: Sport**

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (13:52): I rise to inform the House of three very important events that happened in Griffith on the weekend. The first was the grand final of the QAFL in which the Morningside Panthers defeated the Labrador Tigers, 22-17-149 to 15-6-96. I was privileged to be able to attend the game and cheer on the 'Siders' in what was an amazing game where we saw great mastery of our sport.

The next very important event that I want to mention was the Second Division Rugby League grand final. The Bulimba Valleys Bulldogs, known as the 'Doggies', had won the premiership in 2009, 2012 and 2013 and they were hoping to back up yet again. They did not disappoint. Bulimba Valleys, the Doggies—Brian Dart's team—defeated Redlands 26 to 6. Another great victory for the Doggies. Up the Doggies!

Finally I want to mention the QW AFL grand final. The Queensland Women's AFL grand final was held and Coorparoo, the Navy Roos, beat Zillmere 7-8 50 2-5 17. They beat them 50 to 17. That was a backup of last year's, so they are premiers two years in a row. What a fantastic weekend of sport we had in Griffith. It was immensely heart warming to me to have such great local football teams, in two different codes, having such wonderful victories.
Moore Electorate: St Stephen's School

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (13:53): St Stephen's School is one of the largest independent schools in Western Australia. For over 30 years the school has provided a well-rounded quality and caring education to thousands of local students, whilst maintaining high academic standards.

Under the leadership of visionary principal Tony George and the school council, the St Stephens School Development Association Incorporated has been established to assist the school achieve its vision to create an interactive environment, where students are actively engaged in learning, and to deliver educational opportunities to emerging countries in the Indian Ocean Rim.

The innovative St Stephens School Development Association seeks to build partnerships and raise funds to help the school achieve its goals, which include the development of a building redevelopment master plan for the Duncraig and Carramar campuses. It will also provide scholarships for disadvantaged students and develop on-line learning to deliver education throughout Western Australia and the region.

The establishment of the St Stephens Institute for Educational Research and Development will provide staff with the skills to better equip them to improve the culture, practice and leadership of teaching and learning based on research and evidence within a contemporary Christian education environment. (Time expired)

Drought

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (13:54): Another week has passed and still our desperate farming families are not getting the drought assistance they so desperately need. Throughout February of this year drought was on the front pages of all of our newspapers and you could not turn on morning television without hearing a story about a drought affected family and a fundraising campaign for drought affected farmers.

The Prime Minister went on a drought tour with the Minister for Agriculture and subsequently they announced a drought package—a drought package we welcomed and extended a bipartisan hand for. The Prime Minister's tour stopped the publicity and was a great political circuit breaker for him and for the government. The problem is that the money they announced is not being delivered to the farming families who so desperately need it.

We have had another drought tour since that tour, and this time it was the agriculture minister and the Treasurer. Still, there is no additional assistance, no reshaping of the government's drought policy and no reshaping of the government's drought plan. Tomorrow there is a round table. I do not have any problem with a round table. The usual suspects will be there—the banks, certain rural groups and, I suppose, members of organisations like the NFF—but the time for talking is done. The money is there. I just simply ask the government to start spending it.

Sims, Mr Ashton

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (13:56): Townsville's North Queensland Cowboys lost on Friday night. Enough said! Rugby League is a professional sport and players go where the money is. They have their contracts cancelled through injury or poor form, or they can just be collateral damage. They say that footballers cannot get too close to a community, because
they can be gone next week, but that cannot stop us in the community really loving some of these players.

Ashton Sims is one of those men. He and his family fit into Townsville like a right hand goes around a can of XXXX bitter ale. Ashton leaves our city to take a up with Warrington in the UK, leaving our city desperately short of Metallica fans and Thor, God of Thunder, impersonators. He plays every game with great intensity and passion and he is surely a fierce competitor.

The image I will keep of him though is that of a doting father and husband. This man who has captained Fiji and played for the Broncos, St George and the Cowboys, frames everything he does around his family. He spoke of the Townsville fires trophy night last year. He said he not only loved the game of basketball but also was proud to take his children to see strong, talented, intelligent female role models to whom his daughter could aspire. I do not claim to know him well at all, but I am a huge fan of the way he plays the game and the way he carries himself. I speak on behalf of a great city and a grateful Rugby League community when I say that he will be genuinely missed. I wish him and his family all the very best for the future.

Wollongong Climate Action Network

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (13:57): Yesterday was a beautiful day in Wollongong, in what would have to be one of the most beautiful places in the nation. I do that with no bias whatsoever.

Honourable members interjecting—

Ms BIRD: I hear a few 'hear, hears' from all corners! The beautiful city of Wollongong yesterday saw hundreds of people out at Flagstaff Hill, below the old lighthouse, having picnics, sitting with their families and listening to music. They were there enjoying one of those fantastic Wollongong days. But they were also there with a purpose. We were gathered together by the Wollongong Climate Action Network and their leader Tom Hunt to participate in an international series of forums, getting local communities together to express their deep concern and desire to see serious action taken on climate change.

I am sure many colleagues in this place today will have seen the amazing photos coming out of New York today with their climate rally as well. Hundreds of thousands of people gathered, as thousands and thousands of Australians did yesterday, to say that government walking away from serious action on climate change is a failure for the next generation and a failure for our common future.

Blizzard, Mr Tyler

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:59): I would like to highlight the success of a young athlete from my electorate of Bass. Promising young boxer Tyler Blizzard competed at the Golden Gloves tournament in Queensland last month and was undefeated. Fighting in the under-50-kilogram category, the 16-year-old from Prospect defeated opponents from Queensland and New Zealand.

This tournament was the biggest one attended so far in Tyler's career. He brought home the Golden Gloves in his category, despite fighting a few weight classes higher than he normally does. Tyler is showing all of the class necessary to achieve his ambition of one day representing Australia at either the Commonwealth or the Olympic Games. He is currently being handled by my friend and veteran trainer Graeme George, who mentored former world
champion Daniel Geale in the early part of his career. Graeme said that Tyler has the technique and talent to match it with the best in his class in the country. *(Time expired)*

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

National Security

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): by leave—Because protecting our people is the first duty of government, it is right that I should update the House on developing challenges to our national security. I acknowledge the commitment of all MPs to keeping our people safe and I especially acknowledge the support the Leader of the Opposition has given the government on this subject. On questions of national security it is always best if government and opposition can stand together, shoulder to shoulder. It lets our enemies know they will never shake our resolve. It is a sign that hope is stronger than fear and that decency can prevail over brute force.

From me and from all ministers in this government there will be three key messages: first, the government will do whatever is possible to keep people safe; second, our security measures at home and abroad are directed against terrorism, not religion; and third, Australians should always live normally because the terrorists' goal is to scare us out of being ourselves. As we all know, there have been major antiterrorist raids across Sydney and Brisbane. Our police and security agencies will always strive to stay at least one step ahead of those who would do us harm and so far, thank God, they have succeeded. I cannot promise that hideous events will never take place on Australian soil, but I can promise that we will never stoop to the level of those who hate us and fight evil with evil.

Regrettably, for some time to come, Australians will have to endure more security than we are used to and more inconvenience than we would like. Regrettably, for some time to come, the delicate balance between freedom and security may have to shift. There may be more restrictions on some so that there can be more protection for others. After all, the most basic freedom of all is the freedom to walk the streets unharmed and to sleep safe in our beds at night.

Creating new offences that are harder to beat on a technicality may be a small price to pay for saving lives and maintaining the social fabric of an open, free and multicultural nation. For more than two years the civil war in Syria, followed by the conquest of much of northern Iraq, has been sucking in misguided and alienated Australians. There are at least 60 Australians that we know of currently fighting with terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq, and at least 100 Australians who are supporting them. More than 20 of these foreign fighters have already returned to Australia. As a peaceful and pluralist democracy, we naturally shrink from getting involved in conflicts on the other side of the world, but sometimes these conflicts reach out to us regardless of anything we might do now or have done in the past.

I refuse to call a terrorist movement 'Islamic State' because to do so demeans Islam and mocks the duties a legitimate state bears to its citizens. It can hardly be Islamic to kill without compunction Shias, Yazidis, Turkmen, Kurds, Christians and Sunnis who do not share this death cult's view of the world. Nothing can justify the beheadings, crucifixions, mass executions, ethnic cleansing, rape and sexual slavery that have taken place in every captured town and city. To do such evil, and to revel in doing such evil, is simply unprecedented. To
demand the allegiance of Muslims everywhere, and the conversion or subordination of everyone else, is an ultimatum to the entire world.

As we all know, the Middle East is a difficult part of the world where violence is all too common. Indeed, it is a witch's brew of complexity and danger. Nevertheless, it is in the interests of Australia and the world that we here stand ready to join a coalition to help the new Iraqi government to disrupt and degrade the ISIL movement and regain control over its own country. The claim that ISIL's atrocities and threats are a response to something else is an excuse, not a reason. Nothing remotely justifies the mass slaughter of innocents—overwhelmingly Muslims—that the ISIL movement routinely practices. Nothing remotely justifies ISIL's brazen pretension.

It is important to remember that the September 11 attack predated America's involvement in Iraq, just as the first Bali bombing predated Australia's. Groups such as ISIL will cite our involvement—but they would attack us anyway for who we are and how we live, not for anything we have done. It is our acceptance that people can live and worship in the way they choose that bothers them, not our foreign policy.

ISIL kills because it glories in death and because no one has yet been strong enough to stop it. It is ISIL’s success on the battlefield, at least as much as its absolutism, that explains its perverse appeal. Stopping and reversing its advance will help the people of Iraq; it should also reduce its magnetism for people from around the globe who are looking to join a fight.

Last week, together, the Leader of the Opposition and I helped to farewell the Australian force that is ready to join the international coalition against ISIL. Later this week, I will be in New York for discussions at the United Nations which President Obama will chair. Subsequently, the cabinet will again consider the use of our forces to mount air strikes and to provide military advice in support of the Iraqi government.

Last week, the opposition leader and I separately thanked our police and security agencies for their work to disrupt an ISIL plot to conduct demonstration executions here in Australia. For some months, operatives in Syria have been urging their Australian networks to prepare attacks against targets here. An urgent review of the safety of Parliament House has recommended that the Australian Federal Police take control of internal as well as external security. In this building, there will be more armed police, fewer points of access, and more scrutiny of parliamentary passes.

I thank the presiding officers, particularly you, Madam Speaker, for supporting and for beginning to implement these recommendations. They will mean slightly more inconvenience but considerably more protection for everyone involved in our national government.

Last week, an Australian ISIL operative instructed his followers to pluck people from the street to demonstrate that they could, in his words, 'kill kaffirs'. All that would be needed to conduct such an attack is a knife, a camera-phone and a victim. Consequently, within 36 hours more than 800 police and security agents were deployed in Sydney and more in Brisbane to execute some 30 search warrants. One person has been charged with serious terrorist offences and a large amount of evidence has been amassed that will now carefully be sifted so that further charges might be laid.

It was important to respond with great strength to disrupt this imminent terrorist act. It demonstrates that our determination equals that of those who would do us harm. We will
more than match the resolve of our adversaries in all things except malice; because our military, police and security personnel have goodwill towards everyone except those who are plotting to hurt us.

Today, I pledge that our security agencies will have all the resources and authority that they reasonably need. In August, the government committed an additional $630 million to the Australian Federal Police, Customs and Border Protection, the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service and the Office of National Assessments.

Additional ASIO and ASIS officers are being recruited and deployed; biometric screening will start to be introduced at international airports within 12 months; and more Border Force personnel are now being deployed to international airports. Before Christmas, the government will respond to the review of the national security apparatus that is now underway.

Legislation on agency powers is now before the parliament. Legislation to create new terrorist offences and to extend existing powers to monitor or to detain terror suspects will be introduced this week. We cannot prevent from returning home Australians-born-and-bred who have been foreign fighters, however incompatible with our values their conduct has been. Unfortunately, terrorists do not reform just because they have returned home, as the experience with Australians returning from fighting with the Taliban shows.

My unambiguous message to all Australians who fight with terrorist groups is that you will be arrested, prosecuted and jailed for a very long time; and that our laws are being changed to make it easier to keep potential terrorists off our streets. For one thing, it will be an offence to be in a designated area, for example Raqqa in Syria, without a good reason. The only safe place for those who have been brutalised and militarised by fighting with terrorists is inside a maximum security prison.

As well, legislation requiring telecommunications providers to keep the metadata they already create, and to continue to make it available to police and security agencies, will be introduced soon. If the police and security agencies can make a case for more resources and for more powers, the government’s strong disposition is to provide them because it is rightly expected of us in this place that we will do whatever we possibly can to keep people safe. Of course, any such powers would be exercised responsibly, under the watch of the Inspector-General for Intelligence and Security, the Ombudsman, and the joint standing committees of this parliament.

These are troubling times for everyone accustomed to think that terrorism happens in places other than Australia or that history has largely overtaken the use of military force. Our Australian instinct to assume the best of everyone and our tendency to imagine that we live in the best of all possible worlds is being challenged as rarely before. Still, even in what seem darkening times, I am sure that we will not lose our perspective, and will continue to keep things in proportion. Whatever happens, Australia should remain a country where people trust each other, welcome newcomers and are justifiably confident that in most respects our future will be even better than our past. Our country must remain a beacon of hope and optimism that shines around the world.

If, in the weeks and months ahead, Australians come to appreciate and savour our unity as much as our diversity, we will emerge stronger from these difficulties. Even in these times
there are grounds for hope in the overwhelming support of Australian Muslims for strong measures against terrorism, and in the coalition of Middle Eastern countries now assembling to support the Iraqi government against the ISIL death cult. With our own Grand Mufti, nearly all Australian Muslims believe that ISIL is committing crimes against humanity and sins against God.

It may be too much to expect that everyone everywhere might finally accept that every single human being has the same inherent rights and dignities. It may be too much to expect that everyone everywhere might finally subscribe to the principle—treat others as you would have them treat you. But it is not too much, surely, to expect that our world might finally and fully grasp that it is never right to kill people because they have a different view of God. Killing in the name of God is never right. Mistreating others in the name of God is never right. And if the all but universal revulsion towards the ISIL horror has this result, good might finally emerge despite the pointless death and dislocation that confronts us now.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:17): by leave—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent Mr Shorten, (Leader of the Opposition), speaking in reply to the ministerial statement for a period not exceeding 16 minutes.

Question agreed to.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:17): I thank the Prime Minister for updating the House and I am grateful for the direct dialogue he and I have shared in recent days and weeks. Last Thursday at RAAF Base Williamtown and RAAF Base Amberley, the Prime Minister and I together farewelled some of the brave men and women of the Australian Defence Force who were leaving for the Middle East. That is as it should be—keeping our people safe is above politics. The security of our nation runs deeper than our political differences. We all admire the courage and dedication of the Australian Defence forces, and we are all committed to supporting the families of those serving overseas. As I did last Thursday, again I promise those serving overseas and those due to be rotated to service overseas that the parliament will stand by your families whilst you are far away.

Labor fully supports Australia's contribution to the international humanitarian mission to Iraq. We do not offer this lightly. Sending Australians into harm's way is the most serious of decisions. Our support for the government on this issue is not a matter of jingoism or nationalism; it is a calculation of conscience and national interest. There are four key principles that underpin Labor's approach: firstly, we have indicated that we do not support the deployment of ground combat units to directly engage in fighting ISIL; secondly, that Australian operations should be confined to the territory of Iraq; thirdly, our involvement should continue only until the Iraqi government is in a position to take full responsibility for the security of its nation and its people; and, fourthly, if the Iraqi government and its forces engage in unacceptable conduct or adopt unacceptable policies then we should withdraw our support. These four principles will guide our response to the evolving situation in Iraq. They represent the conditions that we have set for our support and the line that we have drawn for Australia's engagement in the region. Again, this is consistent with the government's approach. We do want our Australian military personnel to carry out a clearly defined mission in Iraq at the request of the Iraqi government and then come home safely.
Military involvement to achieve humanitarian objectives is not our first instinct and it is never our preferred solution to geopolitical problems, but we recognise that sometimes there is simply no alternative. To put it plainly: we cannot negotiate with ISIL, because there is nothing rational about what they seek to do. ISIL and their like wish only to do harm, to spread the bitter hatred that fuels their genocidal intent. They are a breeding ground for terrorists bent on causing havoc not only in the Middle East but also throughout the world, in Australia and our neighbouring countries. They are intent only upon desecration and violence with an insatiable appetite for crime and sectarian destruction. Right now across northern Iraq families are being driven from their homes, innocent people are being murdered and women and girls are being oppressed, raped and forced into sexual servitude. The vulnerable communities of Iraq must be protected, and it is right and proper for Australia to make a contribution to this international endeavour.

Let us be clear about the differences between the situation in Iraq today and the conflict that Labor opposed in 2003. The 2003 war was based on a flawed premise and false information. It was a war embarked upon without a meaningful plan to win the peace. In part, it created some of the conditions that have necessitated this international response. It was a war against a hostile Iraqi government without the support of the United Nations and the international community and, as Labor said at that time, the foundations for possible military intervention were simply not there.

However, today the democratically elected national unity government of Iraq is seeking help from the international community to protect its people from genocide and other mass atrocities. Today we are part of an international effort that includes countries from the region, as the Prime Minister has said. We are fulfilling our responsibility as a good international citizen and our duty as a humanitarian peace-loving nation. By our involvement Australia declares that we will not tolerate the spread of hatred. We will not allow the contagion of hatred—the disease of fanaticism and extremism—to afflict the innocent. We will not meet the brutality and ruthlessness of ISIL with silence.

But we face a long and difficult task. Labor understands that we can never drain the swamp of terrorism by military means alone. Defeating jihadist terrorism requires extensive international corporation in intelligence sharing and criminal law enforcement, and strong domestic homeland security—measures backed by strong community support. We go to Iraq not to topple a dictator but to support democracy; to exercise our global responsibility to protect men, women and children at risk of mass atrocity crimes. Our mission is not to pursue territory but to protect the vulnerable. Our goal is not to assert the supremacy of one faith or to advance the interests of one people; it is to defend the rights of all people to preserve the freedom of all faiths.

Ultimately, building enduring peace in Iraq depends upon the people of Iraq. No matter the size of the coalition our involvement cannot by itself guarantee the stability of this region. If freedom and democracy are artificially imposed from the outside they will not last. Above all, a stable Iraq depends upon an inclusive, unity government: a government that rejects sectarianism and the alienation of minorities; a government able to move past ancient hatreds and unite the nation.

Helping the Iraqi government protect its citizens from the threat of ISIL is vital to the long-term security and stability of Iraq, the broader region and the international community,
including Australia. The humanitarian assistance we offer should not be confined to military aid. As a safe and prosperous nation made great by immigration, Australia should take more refugees from Iraq and Syria. We should reach out a caring arm to people who have been traumatised by this brutal conflict. For more than two centuries we have given those who come across the seas a second chance. We should be part of an international effort to offer safety and security to vulnerable people who have been displaced by the ravages of this conflict.

These are uncertain times and that uncertainty can breed suspicion. That is always the insidious goal of terrorism: to spread division and to nurture intolerance; to create a world where people fear the unknown and resent difference. They want to change the way we live, the way we see ourselves and the way we treat each other. We cannot allow this. Prejudice and bigotry jeopardise the harmony of our society and they feed the fanaticism that they thrive on. We must jealously guard our diverse, tolerant, welcoming and caring society.

Multiculturalism is one of our nation's greatest gifts. It is a miracle of modern Australia. We should never make the millions of Australians who have become Australians—people from every nation and from every faith—feel less safe or less welcome. We will not overcome hatred with hatred. We will not overcome intolerance by being intolerant. Ill-informed and inflammatory comments about Islam are as unhelpful as they are unfair. Muslim Australians should not be stigmatised for the crimes of ISIL. And ISIL has no right to use the name of Islam. The medieval barbarity that it is inflicting upon the innocent has no part of religion. The twisted aetiology of ISIL bears no relation to a faith of peace and tolerance followed by millions of people. That point should be made time and time again.

Labor will study the government's new security legislation in detail. And we will continue to be constructive, because the safety of the people of our nation is a priority that unites us all. Like the Prime Minister, I clearly reject the assumption that our engagement in Iraq has made us more of a target. I accept, however, that Australia must always be vigilant in the face of extremist threats. A very few Australians, poisoned by fanaticism, travelling to this war zone with the intention of participating in this conflict, do represent a threat to our national security. We will give the legislation that addresses the problem of these foreign fighters the careful consideration it deserves. Labor believes that our security agencies and national institutions should have the powers and resources they need to keep Australians safe from the threat of terrorism.

We also believe in safeguarding fundamental democratic freedoms. We must ensure that in legislating to protect our national security that parliament is careful not to damage the very qualities and liberties that we are seeking to defend from terrorist threat. As we work through the government's legislation, Labor will continue to ensure that the national security imperatives are appropriately balanced with the importance of protecting our democratic freedoms. Parliamentary scrutiny and oversight of these proposals is essential. I welcome the intelligence and security committee's recommendations to improve the first bill dealing with the national security law reform, which is due to be debated in the other place this week. I thank the government for accepting the committee's 17 recommendations to improve scrutiny and oversight of that legislation. I know that this constructive approach will be maintained as we finalise this bill and deal with further national security legislation.
All Australians were shocked by the events of last week; shocked by the closeness of a threat that is often seen as remote; shocked at the thought of the scenes from the towns of northern Iraq and Syria being played out in our streets. We do take a certain comfort in our distance from other parts of the world but we should also take comfort from the success of our security agencies. Their professionalism and their expertise helps keep Australians safe. Their response to these threats has been swift and sure. Our police and our intelligence agencies are more committed and better equipped than the people who would seek to threaten our way of life. This should reassure us. This should give Australians the confidence to enjoy their lives without anxiety.

Australians will not be intimidated by the threat of terrorism. We will be true to ourselves. Australians never give in to fear; we will not start now. We do not back down to threats. Whenever we are challenged, we prevail. Our values of peace, tolerance and love will overcome hatred. They always have; they always will.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:30): by leave—I move:

That further statements by indulgence in relation to the Prime Minister’s statement on national security be permitted in the Federation Chamber.

Question agreed to.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:30): I inform the House that the Minister for Foreign Affairs is currently in New York attending the UN General Assembly leaders week and will return on Thursday. The Minister for Trade and Investment will answer questions on her behalf. The Deputy Prime Minister will answer questions on behalf of the Attorney-General and Minister for Defence.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:30): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Minister for Social Services initially signalled in the Sunday Telegraph that the government was planning to defer its harsh cuts to pensions, for now. Since then, the Treasurer has denied these initial claims. So, Prime Minister, who is telling the truth?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:31): The government stands by the proposals that were included in the recent budget, and those proposals will certainly ensure that pensions continue to go up twice a year every year. They will go up every March; they will go up every September. The rate of increase might be a little different from 2017 onwards, but what these changes do will mean that our social services system is sustainable into the long-term, and that is a very, very important national goal. Our country could not go on as it was, living way beyond its means. We cannot go on as we still are, borrowing $1 billion a month every single month to pay the interest on the former government’s debt and deficit and to sustain spending programs which this country simply could not and cannot afford.
So we stand by our budget, but nevertheless we do accept that some of the budget measures do need to be negotiated through the Senate—

Ms Macklin interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: and we will do so in a constructive, a courteous and a collegial way.

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga will desist.

G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (14:32): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the outcomes of the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors meeting held in Cairns over the weekend? What will the meeting's outcomes mean for growth and for jobs?

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I call the honourable the Treasurer, and the member for Moreton will desist.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:33): I thank the honourable member for Leichhardt for the question. I would like to thank him and recognise his contribution to a very successful finance ministers meeting of the G20 in Cairns. It was incredibly successful. The people of Cairns, led by the member for Leichhardt, the mayor, Bob Manning, and the entire council were outstanding hosts. Three and a half thousand people were involved in hosting and facilitating the G20 finance ministers meeting in Cairns. I would particularly like to pay tribute to my parliamentary secretary, the member for Moncrieff, who did a lot of organisation at the other end.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: He is a good man.

The SPEAKER: There will be order, thank you. Silence on my left and right.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence, please, or I will have to ask the Treasurer not to stir you up!

Mr HOCKEY: It helps immeasurably that he was born in Mareeba, so he is a Far North Queenslander, even though he represents the Gold Coast. The bottom line for that investment by the Australian people is: what has been achieved?

I want to recognise that there was a reasonable degree of scepticism about Australia taking on the hosting of the G20 at the time of the announcement, but I do want to recognise the contribution of the former member for Griffith, Kevin Rudd, and also of the member for Lilley, Wayne Swan, for hosting it in Queensland and in Sydney. The meeting in Sydney at the beginning of the year changed the discussion of global finance ministers.

At the beginning of the year there was no global growth target for the world. We laid down, at some risk, a two per cent global target to increase economic growth, to increase the size of the global economy by $2 trillion, to create 20 million new jobs. It has taken a great deal of effort, under the presidency of Australia, including effort by the Prime Minister and all the team, to get people across the line to help to deliver the growth plan that is 90 per cent of the way there. It is not 100 per cent of the way there; there is still more work to be done. But
nearly 1,000 policy initiatives were submitted by member countries. Those 1,000 policy initiatives have the capacity to deliver global growth that starts to deliver on the ground more jobs, better pay, better quality of living, more inclusiveness. That is only achieved under the presidency of Australia. There is still much work to be done, including a very important leaders summit in Brisbane in November.

**Budget**

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (14:36): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Minister for Social Services publicly signalled that the government was planning to defer its harsh cuts to pensions, families and young job seekers, for now. Can the Prime Minister outline exactly which of his savage cuts will be deferred?

The SPEAKER: That is remarkably similar to a question we have already had, but still I give the call to the honourable the Prime Minister.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:36): For the benefit of the shadow minister who asked the question, I can inform her and members opposite and the people of Australia that we stand by all the measures that we introduced in the budget. These measures are important in order to ensure that our social services are sustainable. They are important in order to ensure that this country eventually lives within its means, as we should. This government makes no apologies for wanting to change the rate of indexation applying to social services benefits, and the point I make to members opposite is that if it is right and proper—

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: If the member for Jagajaga wishes to hear the answer, she will remain silent, or leave.

Mr ABBOTT: to index family tax benefit by CPI, then it is right and proper to index other social services by CPI. If it is moral to do this in one respect, it is moral to do it in other respects, too. We absolutely stand by all of the proposals in the budget, but we absolutely accept and understand that in the end this government must get parliamentary support for certain budget measures. That is why we will talk to the opposition and to the crossbench and, indeed, to anyone who has the long-term national interests of our country at heart, because surely even members of the opposition must now accept that the debt and deficit legacy that this government inherited is simply unsustainable. I deeply regret the fact that there are $5 billion worth of savings which the former government announced prior to the election and which the opposition is currently opposing, even though it supported it before the election. I do not think it is too late for members opposite to have an attack of common sense and a vision of the long-term national interest. That is why this government is prepared to talk even to the Labor Party if it is necessary in order to do the right thing by the people of this country.

**Economy**

Mr HOGAN (Page) (14:39): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the government is working with all parts of the economy to boost growth and create jobs?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:39): I thank the honourable member for Page for his question and recognise the fact that if we are going to be part of the heavy lifting associated with improving job creation and lifting economic growth then our budget
has helped to do that. Contained in our budget is the biggest new infrastructure program in Australia's history. We are building the equivalent of eight new Snowy Mountains Schemes over the next six years by facilitating $125 billion of new productive infrastructure, including $5.6 billion on the Pacific Highway in the member's electorate of Page. The fundamental point about all of this is that the Labor Party is opposing all this. The Labor Party is opposing infrastructure spending. It is opposing all of our initiatives that are about building a stronger economy, starting with the Asset Recycling Fund, which is a hugely important initiative. As a way of encouraging Australian states to further engage in the construction of new productive infrastructure, we have laid down a $5 billion program, an incentive payment for the states to go out there and sell their state assets and to recycle the money into new productive assets, to build new assets—road, rail—that are productive for their economies. The reason we are doing this is that if we do not closely manage the transition from a mining-construction economy over the last few years to a mining-production economy that needs to have much broader growth, then we will end up with higher unemployment, as Labor foreshadowed, and we will end up with a less productive economy.

The Asset Recycling Fund is absolutely essential, and this Labor Party is opposing that fund. Do you know what is interesting? Prime Minister, you will be interested in this.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler.

Mr HOCKEY: At a meeting of the state treasurers in Cairns on Friday, the two states that wanted to sign up first are Labor states—South Australia and the ACT. The Treasurer of South Australia could not get his pen on the table fast enough. He wanted to sign up to the deal, and he wanted to make it retrospective—he wanted to cover all the other things as well. And of course the Treasurer of the ACT, who is a member of the Labor Party, is the same—he wants to be there signing.

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield.

Mr HOCKEY: So you have the two Labor states—the only two Labor states—elbowing each other out of the way to come and sign a deal that their federal colleagues are blocking. We are about jobs. Federal Labor is the enemy of jobs.

Social Services

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (14:42): My question again is to the Prime Minister. Given that the government is planning to defer its harsh cuts to pensions, families and young job seekers for now, will the Prime Minister now guarantee that he will not reintroduce these harsh cuts in the future?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:43): I really find it hard to understand exactly what point the shadow minister is trying to make here. We put forward a series of measures in the budget. It is very important that we bring the budget back under control. This was one of the fundamental commitments that we made time and time again to the Australian people during the election.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga will desist!
Mr ABBOTT: Remember them? We will scrap the carbon tax, we will stop the boats, we will build the roads and we will bring the budget back under control.

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat.

Mr ABBOTT: This was a fundamental commitment made again and again and again to the Australian people prior to the election—that we would bring the budget back under control. Unlike members opposite, when we make a commitment to the Australian people, we keep it. So we stand by all the measures in the budget, but we absolutely accept that budget measures do need to go through the parliament. That is why we are prepared to talk to all constructive people in this parliament to do what is necessary to get Labor's debt and deficit disaster back under control.

Migration

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (14:44): My question is directed to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. The defacing of a mosque in Mareeba was an act of intolerance against people who are second, third and fourth generation proud Australians. The area's four major organisations have been led by people of the Islamic faith from Albania. The Ghan is an Australian icon. In contrast, is the government continuing with the policies of skills and family reunion, restricting migration from the homelands to only 30,000 of the 170,000 intake and one-tenth of them come from countries associated with terrorism. Finally visa overstays and section 457s see 400,000 coming to Australia, whose population grows at only 150,000 and whose employment grows by only 180,000. (Time expired)

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:45): I thank the member for Kennedy for his question. As members in this House would know, Australia is the most successful immigration nation on the planet. The reason we have been successful as an immigration nation where many others have failed is that our immigration program over the generations has focused on bringing people to this country who come to join us and not to change us, first of all, and, secondly, come to make a contribution. That is the experience of migration to this country over decades and over generations. This government is going to continue with the policy of bringing people to this country who come to work, who come here to take part in our economy and to participate in a positive way in our society. But in doing so there are things that need to be achieved when people come to this country, and they are to engage, to involve, to participate and to integrate. The reason for that is essential—that is how they realise the great Australian dream that they came to this country to enjoy. We apply our immigration laws in this country without respect to religion, without respect to ethnicity, without respect to language—

Mr Katter: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I agree strongly with what the minister is saying but—

The SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr Katter: The point of order is that I am asking him whether the current policies are going to be reviewed, because they have led to divisiveness—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. As I have said time and again, raising a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question.
Mr MORRISON: I am seeking to explain to the member for Kennedy that our policies, that have been focused predominantly on skilled migration to this country, have produced social cohesion in this country and are the reason we have the most integrated set of migration outcomes. We want to see that continue and that is why this government has ensured that we have maintained the level of skilled migration of the total intake at over two-thirds. I remind members of the House that under the Keating government the proportion of the immigration intake was less than 30 per cent skilled. That was changed under the Howard government and was raised to almost 70 per cent. To the credit of those opposite, they continued it at those levels and we had some bipartisanship for a time on skilled migration when the member for McMahon was the minister for immigration.

Members opposite should know that it will be the policy of this government to pursue immigration without discrimination on the grounds of religion or ethnicity or anything of that nature. We are looking for people to come and join this team—people who are going to contribute to this country. That is the success and history of immigration in this country. That is what will produce the cohesion and that is why I join with the member in condemning the sorts of attacks that he has just referred to in his question. They are an abomination to the way of life that we stand for in this country, and the immigration policies that we have crafted over generations will be continued by this government because they are producing economic and social dividends in this country and they are designed to produce unity, not division.

The SPEAKER: I call the honourable member for Hasluck.

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

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy will resume his seat and cease interjecting.

Indigenous Affairs

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (14:49): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on his visit to East Arnhem Land last week, and how is the government deepening its engagement with Indigenous Australians?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:49): I thank the member for Hasluck for his question and I acknowledge his place of great honour in our country's history as the first Indigenous member of the House of Representatives. As many members would recall, during last year's election campaign I promised to spend a week in Yolngu country, and last week I kept that commitment. Along with the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Scullion, and my parliamentary secretary, the member for Aston, we spent five working days in Gulkula, Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy. We were joined at different times by the Minister for Education, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Finance, the Minister for Veterans Affairs and also the Assistant Minister for Health and the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure, and of course the member for Hasluck himself was there. The relevant departmental secretaries were there too. For the best part of a week, Indigenous affairs was a key focus of government. This is a very good way of demonstrating to Indigenous people that their concerns have not been lost amongst those of the general community.

On Indigenous policy the government's priority is absolutely crystal clear—to get the kids to school, to get the adults to work and to keep communities safe. I wish to acknowledge the commitment of the Yolngu people to education, and I wish to acknowledge their determination to ensure that their land is an economic asset as well as a cultural and spiritual
one. I also wish to acknowledge their yearning, along with the yearning of so many people, black and white, right around Australia for Indigenous recognition in our Constitution. This is a fully bipartisan cause and I do wish to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the constructive dialogue we have had on this subject. Most of all, I wish to thank Galarrwuy Yunupingu for the hospitality he showed to me and my colleagues over the last few days. He is of course one of our country's greatest ever Indigenous leaders. I am the seventh Prime Minister that Galarrwuy has dealt with. I acknowledge the goodwill of all my predecessors and I pledge to do what I can to build on their good work. I should also thank the Army for providing me and my colleagues with accommodation and catering, and I pledge, myself, to continue to spend a week a year in an Indigenous community as long as I remain in public life.

Indigenous Affairs

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:52): My question is to the Prime Minister. I do commend the Prime Minister on his visit to Arnhem Land last week. After meeting with Aboriginal communities and learning more about the challenges they face, is the Prime Minister now prepared to reverse the $500 million cuts in his budget to Indigenous services?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:52): There have been some modest reductions in funding for some programs, but I think the Leader of the Opposition will find that overall Indigenous spending continues to increase every year. What we are seeking to do is to bring about efficiencies in Indigenous spending. I should point out for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition that the changes which he refers to in his question were well and truly discussed and worked up with my Indigenous Advisory Council, led by a former National President of the Australian Labor Party, and those changes were supported by the Indigenous Advisory Council.

Members of the Indigenous Advisory Council—all Australians of good will—are determined to ensure that we do get maximum value from our spending. The Leader of the Opposition and everyone in this House, certainly not simply members on this side of the House, should understand that the important thing is not what you spend; the important thing is the results you get, and that is what we are determined to achieve: better results when it comes to Indigenous policy and better results when it comes to getting the kids to school, the adults to work and the communities safe. That is what I am determined to do. I am very confident that we can get a better result for the Indigenous people of Australia with the changes that we have announced. It is my determination to get better results through more efficiency, more focus and more targeting in this spending.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:54): I advise the House that we have visiting with us a delegation from Samoa, led by the honourable the Speaker of the Parliament of Samoa. We make you all most welcome.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Indigenous Education

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Education. Will the minister outline to the House how the government is working with Indigenous communities to improve literacy outcomes. How was this approach informed by his visit to East Arnhem Land last week?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:55): I thank the member for Wannon for his serious question about Indigenous disadvantage in education and how we are trying to address it. I am very pleased that I had the opportunity last week to visit the communities of East Arnhem Land, with the Prime Minister, other cabinet ministers and ministers. We went to the communities of Gunyangara, Nhulunbuy and the Yirrkala. In fact, these are not the first Indigenous communities that I have visited, because the first committee I ever sat on in this place in 1993 was the Indigenous affairs committee. I spent much time in Indigenous communities. With the former minister for health, Tony Abbott, I went to the APY Lands on many occasions to see what benefits we could bring to that community. If the opposition took Indigenous affairs seriously rather than seeing it as a tokenistic, ideological playground, they would actually recognise that some of the policies we are trying introduce—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr PYNE: Well, stop interjecting when I am answering a serious question about Indigenous disadvantage. You just can't help yourselves. My trip to East Arnhem Land reinforced my view that the government has got it right in putting student outcomes first, before ideology. We announced on 1 July this year $22 million more to expand Direct Instruction and Explicit Instruction across remote communities in Australia. Building on the excellent work that Cape York Partnership has done on Cape York in communities like Coen, Hope Vale and Aurukun, we want the good work that Noel Pearson and his people at Cape York Partnership have achieved there spread across more remote communities, particularly Indigenous communities. That $22 million will lead to more phonics based instruction in remote communities.

Soon, hopefully, 40 schools will be announced across Australia as the beneficiaries, beginning next year, of extra Direct Instruction and Explicit Instruction. Just to give the House some examples of the benefits: at the Aurukun campus, the proportion of year 3 students achieving at or above national minimum standards rose from 27 per cent in 2012 to 66 per cent in 2013. At the Hope Vale campus, the proportion of year 3 students achieving at or above the national minimum standard rose from 29 per cent in 2012 to 54 per cent in 2013. Some of Australia's most disadvantaged communities are using Explicit Instruction too. The member for Leichhardt's electorate in Bamaga, the Northern Peninsula Area State College and the Goondi State School at Innisfail East State School are all using Explicit Instruction. Those students are now in the top half of the nation's NAPLAN results. So we are getting good outcomes for students by using practical measures to do so. I am very pleased to see our good work in practice being expanded across remote Australia.
DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:58): I advise that in my gallery we have present with us from the Australian Political Exchange Council's 31st delegation of young political leaders from the United States of America. We make them most welcome.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (14:59): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, I refer to the Children and Family Centre in Fitzroy Crossing—one of 38 centres across Australia that faces closure because of the Prime Minister's cuts to Indigenous services. Aboriginal leader June Oscar says that the Fitzroy community faces a crisis because of the centre's potential closure, stating: '… it impacts on our kids, the retention of staff jobs and service delivery'. Prime Minister, why should the Fitzroy community suffer because of your broken promises?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:59): I defy members opposite to justify this charge of broken promises.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left.

Mr ABBOTT: Overall funding for Indigenous programs goes up. Overall funding for social services, for schools, for hospitals and for everything continues to increase—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga on a point of order.

Ms Macklin: I seek leave to table a page 185 that shows—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume her seat.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga is warned. You know perfectly well that is not a point of order.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga will leave the chamber under standing order 94(a).

The member for Jagajaga then left the chamber.

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler on a point of order.

Mr Albanese: The member for Jagajaga sought leave to table a document, entirely within the provision of standing orders, in response to a request from the Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. The member for Jagajaga was asked to leave, because when she was asked to resume her seat she did not do so. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: We are continuing to fund all of the major programs.

Opposition members interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta will desist and so will the members for Lalor and Adelaide.

Mr ABBOTT: We are determined to ensure that we get the best possible value for our spending, and we are determined to ensure that our spending is sustainable over the long term. The problem with members opposite is that they are not interested in efficiency. They are only interested in spending. They are not interested in results. They are only interested, it seems, in bureaucracy. They are much better at building bureaucracy than they are at getting results on the ground. Our determination is to get results on the ground, and if that means re-casting programs and if it means over time directing funding—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton is warned—

Mr ABBOTT: from services that are less effective towards services that are more effective, so be it.

Northern Territory: Infrastructure

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (15:02): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the minister inform the House what actions the government is taking to improve roads and infrastructure in the Northern Territory? How was the government's plan informed by the member's visit to East Arnhem Land last week?

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (15:02): It is a great privilege to answer this question from the member for Solomon, and I thank her for our first day in Darwin, on our way into Arnhem Land, when we looked at infrastructure that we are committing to around Darwin to help with growth around Palmerston and to ensure that the Northern Territory can take advantage of the growth opportunities we so desperately want. The Treasurer mentioned earlier about the commitment of this government to jobs and opportunities for all Australians.

It was a real privilege to join the Prime Minister in East Arnhem Land, and I thank the community for welcoming us into their very special part of Australia. It was a unique opportunity to understand the pressures from their perspective and what we need to do to help assist and build the infrastructure to enable those communities, not just in an economic sense but in a social sense. It was a welcome trip from our perspective, but I think it also gave the community an opportunity to provide feedback.

We are committed the Northern Territory. There is $90 million extra in the budget and the $77 million Northern Territory roads package that we announced in the budget, which will strengthen and widen roads—

Mr Dreyfus: What about something new?

Mr BRIGGS: This was new in the budget, Member for Isaacs.

Mr Albanese: It was in the 2013 budget.

Mr BRIGGS: Now, this $77 million we have put in place is new in the budget. We are also continuing with the $90 million Regional Roads Productivity Package, which is focused on Central Arnhem Road, Arnhem Link Road, and additional—

Mr Albanese interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler.

Mr BRIGGS: The irrelevance of the member for Grayndler is becoming hard to bear.

An opposition member: Relevance deprivation syndrome.

Mr BRIGGS: Relevance deprivation syndrome? Honestly, just focus on South Sydney, mate. I reckon that is the only thing that is going well for you.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member will return to the question and there will be silence on my left.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence from both the member for Gorton and the member for Grayndler.

Mr BRIGGS: He has the suit from the 1990s and he is hoping for the South Sydney of the 1990s. We are focused on discussions with the Northern Territory government about additional infrastructure that can assist people in East Arnhem Land to develop not just economic infrastructure but also to develop education—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler on a point of order.

Mr Albanese: The minister was asked about new initiatives and he has announced the $90 million that was in the—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat and the minister will also resume his seat. There will be silence. I realise the member for Grayndler is a frustrated former minister in this area, but that does not give him a licence to get up and abuse the standing orders. The minister has the call.

Mr BRIGGS: The government has spoken to the Northern Territory government about additional infrastructure that will not just facilitate economic opportunities in East Arnhem Land but will ensure that communities can get to the jobs we want them to have and to the schools we want them to attend.

Indigenous Affairs

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:06): My question is to the Prime Minister. This month I visited the Bubup Wilam Early Learning Centre in Thomastown. It is a centre that provides vital early education help and family support services for vulnerable Indigenous children and families. This centre is now one of 38 centres across Australia facing closure because of the Prime Minister's cuts to Indigenous services. Why should the children who go there, and their parents, pay for the Prime Minister's broken promises.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:06): I fear that members opposite are in fact misleading the House in this area. I really do.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left.

Mr Shorten interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will desist.
Mr ABBOTT: My recollection of this is that the former government did make capital funding available for Indigenous childcare centres.

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide is warned.

Mr ABBOTT: It made no recurrent funding available and the capital funding came out, as I understand it, on 1 July this year. So members opposite, when they were in government, made capital funding available. The capital funding that they made available ceased, as I understand it, on 1 July and they never made recurrent funding available because, quite properly, they thought recurrent funding for preschools should be provided by state and territory governments. I know they have got—

Mr Shorten interjecting—

Mr Hockey interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition and the Treasurer will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: Members opposite cannot help themselves. They think that more money is the answer to every single problem. The reality is that if there have been any cuts in this particular area, they are cuts put in place by the former government.

Carbon Pricing

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (15:08): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. I remind the minister that the Queensland government has decided to reduce bus, train and ferry ticket fares by five per cent as a result of the repeal of the carbon tax. What other measures have been passed on to families and businesses in Queensland since the government scrapped the world’s largest carbon tax, and are there any threats to these savings?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (15:09): Let me say thank you to the member for Brisbane. This is her second consecutive question on the environment, which is two more than the entire Labor Party over the course of the last year. She has just raised the issue of the cost of public transport in Brisbane. Yesterday we heard the Queensland Premier announce a five per cent decrease—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will desist.

Mr HUNT: in the cost of public transport for Brisbane residents, to take effect as of 3 November this year. What is the reason for this? The Premier said: We have found $30 million worth of savings in the transport budget with the abolition of the carbon tax. But it gets a little bit better than that. Because they have factored in other costs associated with the carbon tax, they will freeze instead of have a 2½ per cent decrease in terms of the costs related to the carbon tax for bus, train and ferry from 1 January 2015. So all up, as of next year, it will be a 7½ per cent saving. But it is not just public transport. What have we seen in terms of electricity costs in Queensland since the carbon tax was repealed by us but was wanted to be retained by those opposite?

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith will desist.
Mr HUNT: For residential customers, Simply Energy has announced a nine per cent reduction, Power Direct has announced a 9.2 per cent reduction and Ergon Energy has announced a 9.4 per cent reduction. And do you know what? Those opposite want to bring all of those costs back. For small business customers, Lumo Energy has announced an 8.9 per cent reduction, ERM Power has announced a 9.1 per cent reduction and Energy Australia has announced a 9.1 per cent reduction. But my favourite is Origin Energy which has announced, for its commercial and industrial customers, who are largely manufacturers—you remember them, you used to have workers in that sector—there is a 15 per cent reduction that you want to take away. We are delivering a 15 per cent reduction in electricity price for Queensland commercial and industrial customers, and those opposite want to bring it back. The member for Brisbane asked whether there is a threat to these price reductions. There is. At the next election, Australian consumers and Australian voters will have a very clear choice: a 7½ per cent reduction in public transport costs for Queenslanders and an average of seven per cent for gas or nine per cent for electricity, or the reverse if those opposite are voted back. We removed it carbon tax; they want it back.

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

AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS

Report No. 1 of 2014-15

The SPEAKER (15:12): I present the Auditor-General's Performance Audit report No. 1 of 2014-15, Confidentiality in government contracts—Senate order for departmental and agency contracts (Calendar year 2013 compliance): Across agencies.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:13): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings

COMMITTEES

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Membership

The SPEAKER (15:13): I have received advice from the Chief Government Whip that he has nominated Mrs Prentice to be a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in place of Mr Simpkins.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:13): by leave—I move:

That Mr Simpkins be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and that, in his place, Mrs Prentice be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.
PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (15:14): Madam Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr ALBANESE: I do. In question time today, the assistant to the Minister for Infrastructure suggested that the former government and myself as minister had not funded projects that were re-announced last week for Central Arnhem Road and Arnhem Link Road, including the 'new bridge over Rocky Bottom Creek.'

I refer to the media release of 20 May 2013, headed '2013 Budget: real money for projects in the NT', which said:

Beyond Darwin, the Budget provides $90 million for our Regional Roads Productivity Package, which will:

amongst other things—

- Erect a new bridge over rocky Bottom Creek along Central Arnhem Road;

This was the precise project reannounced last week by the government.

The SPEAKER: I take it that that press release was your personal press release, as you were making a personal explanation?

Mr Albanese: Yes.

BILLS

Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (15:15): Given I had only a short amount of time earlier, I will recommence my speech. Of all the many policies that governments are called to deal with, those dealing with the lives and the welfare of children, as the most vulnerable group in our society, must surely be the most important. Children everywhere deserve a safe and secure home environment. However, it is the sad reality that in some countries, for a range of complex social, cultural or economic reasons, there are children unable to be cared for by their parents, extended families or anyone else and who have no possibility of growing up in a family environment in their country of birth. For some of these children, intercountry adoption might be the only way in which they can have the opportunity to be part of a secure and loving family and to have a chance at a better life.

Intercountry adoption is a complex and sensitive matter for all parties concerned, and a decision to remove a child from its country of birth and possibly, in some instances, from its birth parents is not one that the Australian government believes should ever be taken lightly. Nevertheless, we support international adoption arrangements made under the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, which have established safeguards to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child and also that eligible, caring families in Australia and elsewhere have the
opportunity to adopt an overseas born child and provide that child with a family, a home and a future that he or she might never otherwise have had.

Unfortunately, for too long now significant barriers have faced Australian families wanting to adopt from overseas. Inconsistent rules, high costs and lengthy waiting periods are common—so much so that they have been found to deter many people who would have liked to adopt a child from even starting the adoption process. In recognising that the processes required in bringing together those children from overseas who legitimately need a safe and loving home with those Australians who dream of providing one have been overburdened with inconsistency and complex red tape, the Prime Minister announced in December of last year that the government would simplify overseas adoption by the end of this year. At this point, I want to recognise the personal commitment to this issue made by our Prime Minister. By removing those bureaucratic requirements and delays which serve little real purpose and benefit no-one but simply add to the complexity and cost faced by adopting families, the government wants to make it easier to adopt when such action is clearly agreed by all parties to be in the best interests of the child.

Australia's overarching requirement for any potential partner-country willing to participate in intercountry adoption arrangements with us is that the country essentially meet ethical and legal framework standards and safeguards equivalent to those required under the Hague convention to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child. In those cases where a country is not a signatory to the convention but is seen to satisfactorily meet convention standards, we see no reason why adoptions in that country should not be recognised in the same way as adoptions in convention countries. The changes proposed in this bill will, therefore, place children adopted by Australian citizens under bilateral arrangements in the same position as those adopted under Hague convention arrangements—that is, they will be able to travel to Australia with their new families as Australian citizens on an Australian passport.

Seeking as it does to reform the current procedural requirements and reduce unnecessary red tape, the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014 is a positive step forward in delivering the government's promise. The key feature of the bill is an amendment which expands the scope of the existing Hague convention provisions so as to include adoptions in accordance with bilateral arrangements. The decision-making framework remains the same. The amendments made by the bill will apply for the benefit of all children adopted under bilateral arrangements, whether the adoption was finalised before or after the amendments come into force.

The government has clearly been delivering on its commitment to improve adoption procedures in other ways. A report by senior officials on options to reform overseas adoption, which was informed by public submissions, has been considered. Improvements have already been announced to the process for families adopting children from Taiwan and South Korea, and a new overseas adoption program with South Africa has commenced—and there are a further seven new programs in the pipeline. COAG has agreed in principle to a new national overseas adoption service from 2015, and options to reduce waiting times for visas for adoptive children from overseas are being developed. In addition, the government will introduce amendments to the Australian Citizenship Act so that obtaining Australian
citizenship can happen in a child's country of origin as well as to address processing problems associated with the visa system.

The Abbott government is clearly committed to adoption reform to enable more Australians who wish to adopt a child from overseas to achieve this wonderful outcome. Bringing together a child in need of a home, particularly a special needs child, as children of intercountry adoption so frequently are, with those who wish to offer a safe and loving family is something that should be managed as sensitively and with as little unnecessary red tape as possible. Potential adopting parents are required to go through an extremely complex and robust vetting process—and rightly so—but should not have to deal with any more red tape than is absolutely necessary. I strongly support this bill and commend it to the House.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (15:22): Children are such a natural part of marriage and life partnerships. They are such a natural function of the biology of life and, for most, a natural and fairly easy process. There is no slight intended to women who face the not insignificant challenges of pregnancy and childbirth meant there. The basis of the family is the key pillar of our society and cannot be overstated. But for some, it is just not easy. Having children is not a straightforward affair and it can be a heartbreaking and demoralising experience when close friends and family start and complete their families and couples are left behind, because—despite every effort—they cannot have children.

This bill is about inter-country adoption, but I would briefly like to touch on local adoption. Australia is undoubtedly scarred by the experience of the Stolen Generation. I will not go back over the history of that experience, the motivations behind it and mixed outcomes it provided. The long-term result is that local adoption has fallen well out of favour. However, with the tragedy of totally dysfunctional parents and the revolving door of foster placements—and God bless those wonderful people who selflessly devote themselves to foster parenting—I fear Australian family law courts are not making the best long-term decisions for at least some of the children.

Is it not possible, even highly likely, that a child removed from serial parental failure and moved in and out of foster homes would not have a far greater chance at life if the responsible agencies and courts were simply to make the decision that—where the child's current circumstances are intolerable and the likelihood of that situation improving substantially are remote—they would be far better off with parents that will love, cherish and nurture the individual? It seems to me our family court system and agencies are haunted by the past and that collectively we are not bold enough to make the right long-term decisions.

It is also worthwhile reflecting also that in the 2012-13 financial year, Australia spent $237 million on assisted reproductive technology through the Medicare system. There is no cap on the number of treatments nor is there any age restriction. I am not suggesting for one minute that couples with fertility issues should not avail themselves of this service, but we do know as each cycle fails the chances of a successful pregnancy with further treatment reduces. Perhaps if more viable alternatives existed—and in this case we are talking about adoption—and perhaps if it were easier to adopt, couples who are desperate to have families may well choose to abandon the IVF programs earlier and follow the path of adoption.

To return to this bill, which refers to international adoption: I was recently contacted by Tanya Fry, a 39-year-old teacher. It is so typical, really. Her and her husband have run the full gauntlet, first from the decisions to have a family, to the initial disappointment of not easily

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getting pregnant, to the long-term sadness of that failure, to the seeking of help and to the fertility and IVF roller coaster. Nothing is easy, personal or particularly private about the process. Then in their late 30s, Tanya and her husband realised that they would not be able to have their own biological baby and decided that perhaps adoption would be the best option.

I would like to read a few paragraphs from a letter that Tanya has penned for me. This starts in the middle of the letter:

Our main concern is the time it may now take to adopt from overseas (as it is near impossible to adopt within Australia). My husband and I are approaching our 40s and are concerned that the process is going to take so long that we will run out of time. There are significant amounts of people in the same situation as us and it is important to note how stressful this process is. Couples including ourselves have generally been through significant infertility challenges before making the decision to adopt (in our case recurrent miscarriage). It is really important to us that the timeline suggested for this restructuring is followed so that we are not put through additional stress.

The application is quite a difficult one to fill out. That is, the application for inter-country adoption. My main concerns are with the BMI question, my husband has a very muscular build and is not overweight yet his BMI is over what is required (only slightly). It seems ridiculous that someone so fit and healthy could be rejected because of his build.

While watching television I become increasingly upset seeing adverts asking for money to help children/orphans overseas who have nothing. I don't understand how there can be so many children in the world who need parents and why it is so hard to adopt a child. My husband and I are both on good incomes and have the means and ability to raise a child without any assistance. We would be outstanding parents so why is it all so hard!

That is not the end of the letter, but I will end that quote there.

I do not know the prospective parents that well, but I did meet Tanya for the first time the week before last. I am pretty confident that a couple who have tried so hard are likely to be good parents. They have good jobs, a home and commitment. They have already proved far more than most of us are ever asked to do. When we are people who are lucky to be able to raise our own children, we do not get asked how heavy we are. We do not get asked intrusive questions. We just start families. Most of us do a pretty fair fist of actually becoming good parents. What criteria is that to judge people on? We are not even counselled before we start a biological family. It just makes me wonder what we are doing and why we make it so difficult to adopt from overseas.

Then there was the news for Tanya and her husband that the application going okay, but they might have to wait five to seven years. I know adoption is not for all parents and its main emphasis should be on the children, but it is hard to believe—with all the children in the world living in poverty with no family or at least no functioning family and living without education—that we cannot find a way to bring these two needy parties together and that we cannot find a way so that a needy child can live a life of relative privilege in Australia with successful people who could be their loving and compassionate parents if they were only given the chance.

While I recognise that for a number of reasons inter-country adoptions have declined across the globe, it is very concerning to me that Australians were able to adopt just 129 children last year. That is a very small number. It is a small number of the tens of thousands
of available children in the world who could have a life of comparative privilege and it is a very small number of the desperate potential parents who are given the opportunity to have what so many of us take for granted—a family.

I know the world is not a perfect place and there will always be those who take advantage of others. We must be ever vigilant so Australian adoptions are never associated with events that could possibly be construed as trafficking. That is why Australia should form adoption programs only with countries or third parties that meet the criteria of the Hague convention. I congratulate the government on taking the initiative of opening a new program with South Africa and making improvements to the process with South Korea and Taiwan. I am also very pleased that COAG have endorsed the move to a national agency to facilitate international adoption to help speed up the granting of suitable visas. It makes sense to have a national desk—after all, migration is a national responsibility and our government-to-government relationships are at this level.

This bill will allow the granting of citizenship as soon as adoption is verified, enabling the newly adopted children to travel with their parents on an Australian passport. It will not suddenly make overseas adoption easy—and I hope there is more we can do in that space—but it is a significant step in the right direction. I hope we can do more in this area and complete the lives of Tanya and her husband and many others like them around Australia and really improve the opportunities of the children that they might adopt.

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (15:31): I am very pleased to be speaking on the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014. The purpose of this bill is to facilitate the granting of Australian citizenship to children who have been adopted by Australian citizens under the bilateral adoption arrangements between Australia and countries that are not party to the Hague convention on intercountry adoption. As the Prime Minister said in the House on 29 May this year, policy reform and progress on intercountry adoption has been in the too-hard basket for far too long and simply because of red tape.

This bill has at its very heart a humanitarian focus that looks to remove the unnecessary red tape that gets in the way of children from around the world who have no parents or no effective parents being able to have a much better life in Australia. When you look at the state of the world at the moment, with the rise of mindless terror and vicious international criminal conduct, it is imperative that all of us do all we can to remove the barriers for entry for these children. That is absolutely clear. To this end I find it more gratifying that the policy focus of the bill in removing red tape for these children to have a safe and loving home in this country is not just a symbolic gesture but very real. It will produce outcomes that will make very positive and tangible differences to the lives of so many children around the world.

Earlier Madam Speaker was in the chair. I want to pay tribute to her and the work she and her committee did many years ago in this area. Too often in the past seven years the people of Australia have had their expectations falsely built up by symbolic actions with no substance behind them, but this bill is different because this government is different. Indeed, this promise was made by the Prime Minister in December last year when he committed to reforming overseas adoptions by the end of 2014.

To this end, on 19 December last year Prime Minister Abbott announced that he would establish the Interdepartmental Committee on Intercountry Adoption to consider options for reform and to improve intercountry adoption processes. There were a total of 108
Submissions. Twenty-six were from organisations and the remainder came from individuals representing adult adoptees, adoptive and prospective parents, academics and individuals with a professional interest in intercountry adoption, and parents and children who are now adults deeply affected by past practices of forced adoptions. In addition, the Prime Minister received 60 items of correspondence on intercountry adoption reform.

Submissions made to the interdepartmental committee expressed a significant level of frustration with Australia's current approach to intercountry adoption. The particular issues raised were the Commonwealth's approach to selecting intercountry adoption partner countries, the quality of the states and territories' administration and level of support provided to prospective adoptive parents, the cost, the waiting times, the uncertainty of outcomes not only overseas but also within Australia, and the standard of postadoption support services.

There were other criticisms that related to the current Commonwealth-state model of regulating intercountry adoption and the lack of nationally consistent laws, policy and procedures. That made it really difficult for families who had moved interstate and across territories to receive consistent and predictable levels of support. It also made it very difficult to provide consistent outcomes across Australia.

Taken as a whole these frustrations can represent significant impediments to Australians considering intercountry adoption. Given the frustrating history, the interdepartmental committee itself stressed that there is an imperative to be clear about the impact that any reforms are likely to have on these impediments to ensure expectations of families are realistic with regard to the future of intercountry adoption in Australia and to make clear that in many cases they will go towards improving the experience of people participating in intercountry adoption rather than making a dramatic change in the rate of adoptions.

It should also be noted that 24 of the submissions made to the committee did not support intercountry adoption and highlighted concerns with the safeguards in place to protect parents and children from unlawful practices and the effects on children growing up outside their culture. Such concerns were acknowledged up-front by the Prime Minister in his second reading speech, when he said:

We do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past, but we do want to remove the red tape and reduce the delays—that do not benefit anyone.

The interdepartmental committee noted that Australia is committed to ensuring that all parties to intercountry adoption arrangements are protected from exploitation and abuses. These vulnerable parties clearly include children and birth families, where a child has been relinquished, and the prospective adoptive parents. It should not automatically be assumed that the interests of these parties are necessarily in conflict. The interdepartmental committee addressed these concerns quite directly on page 8 of its report when it states that:

Greater efficiency in the process, so long as it does not come at the expense of thoroughness, may remove some of the frustrations experienced by prospective adoptive parents, while also reducing the amount of time spent by children in institutions. Australia's approach to adoption recognises that children who cannot be brought up with their family are entitled to grow up in a permanent, secure and loving family environment. A more efficient intercountry adoption system would be better able to provide children with this environment in a timely fashion.
Australia's current regulatory approach observes the international principles guiding intercountry adoption which is set out in the 1993 Hague Convention on the protection of children and cooperation in respect of intercountry adoption.

The fundamental principles in the Convention are: (1) the best interests principle that the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration in all Convention intercountry adoptions; (2) the subsidiarity principle that adoption is subsidiary to care by family, and intercountry adoption is subsidiary to domestic adoption; (3) the safeguards principle that safeguards must be developed to prevent the abduction, sale of, and traffic in children; (4) the cooperation principle that authorities must establish and maintain effective cooperation to ensure that these safeguards are effectively maintained; and (5) the competent authorities principle that only competent authorities—appointed in each country—should be permitted to authorise intercountry adoptions.

For the purposes of the Hague Convention, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department is the Australian central authority for intercountry adoption. The states and territories are also central authorities under the Hague Convention. However, owing to the lack of political impetus from the Commonwealth, states and territories and the complexity of amending state and territory legislation that relates to both intercountry and domestic adoption, this work has not been progressed, despite many attempts. This is not an acceptable situation. As the Prime Minister said on 5 May this year:

For too long children who legitimately need a safe and loving home and Australians who dream of providing this home have been hindered by red tape and confusion. The Government is pleased to be able to undertake real action to bring families together.

Consistent with these goals, the government has been moving ahead in progressing this issue.

Apart from the Prime Minister's commissioning of the Interdepartmental Committee on Intercountry Adoption report, the government has also put in place amendments to the Family Law regulations that will make it easier to recognise adoptions from Taiwan and South Korea. We have also opened a new overseas adoption program with South Africa; we have instructed officials to commence discussions with seven other countries about possible new overseas adoption programs; we have chaired a COAG meeting which agreed in principle to the Commonwealth providing a new national overseas adoption service from 2015. We have introduced amendments to the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 to make it easier for children from Taiwan and South Korea to obtain Australian citizenship in their country of origin; and have asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship to develop options to reduce waiting times for visas for adoptive children from overseas. The government is now working through the details of the new reforms with the states so that the new approach to overseas adoption can commence as early as 2015.

The purpose of this bill is to facilitate the grant of Australian citizenship to children adopted by Australian citizens under bilateral adoption arrangements between Australia and countries that are not party to the Hague Convention on intercountry adoption. Under such bilateral arrangements, Australian citizens have for several years been unable to adopt children from South Korea, Taiwan and Ethiopia. Although the intercountry adoption program with Ethiopia is now closed, there are a number of families who are awaiting the finalisation of their adoptions.
At present, children adopted under bilateral arrangements require a passport from the home country and an Australian adoption visa to travel to Australia. This imposes additional complexity and cost on the adopting families. Under the amendments to be made by this bill, children will be able to be granted citizenship as soon as the adoption is finalised. They will then be able to travel to Australia on Australian passports with their new families as Australian citizens. The bill will place children adopted by Australian citizens under bilateral arrangements in the same position as children adopted by Australian citizens under Hague Convention arrangements.

The overarching requirement from Australia's perspective that a potential partner country is, first, willing participate in intercountry adoption arrangement with Australia, and, second, will meet the standards in safeguards equivalent to those required under the Hague Convention. Where a non-convention country meets these standards, there is no reason why adoptions should not be recognised in the same way as adoptions in convention countries. The government has recently given effect to this principle by amending the Family Law (Bilateral Arrangements—Intercountry Adoption) Regulations 1998 to provide for automatic recognition of adoptions in partner countries once the adoption is finalised and an adoption compliance certificate has been issued. And in this regard, the bill enhances the wellbeing of adopted children by creating a more streamlined and cost-effective process which allows them to commence their lives in Australia more quickly.

The bill will not change post-adoption support arrangements, which are provided by state and territory governments in accordance with their respective laws. While the laws and procedures may vary in some respects between states and territories, support services are provided to adopted children and their families on an identical basis whether the adoption took place under the Hague Convention or under bilateral arrangements. Children adopted from Hague Convention countries, which issue adoption compliance certificates, are already able to obtain Australia citizenship as soon as the adoption is finalised. This has been the case since the enactment of the Australian Citizenship Act 2007. The adoption compliance certificate provides assurance that the adoption has been carried out in accordance with the ethical and legal framework required by the Hague Convention. The process for adoption under bilateral arrangements, including automatic recognition under Australian law, is in substance identical. There is no reason why those children should be treated differently under the Australian Citizenship Act.

The key feature of the bill is an amendment to subdivision AA of division 2 of part 2 of the act. The amendment simply expands the scope of the existing Hague Convention provisions, so that they also cover adoptions in accordance with bilateral arrangements. There are many important safeguards that the government has built into this legislation. These would be relevant, clearly, if fraud or some other irregularity came to light before citizenship was granted. Similarly, the minister must not approve a child becoming a citizen if the minister is not satisfied of the identity of the child. The amendments proposed by the bill would apply for the benefit of all children adopted under bilateral arrangements, whether the adoption is finalised before or after the amendments come into force.

The government is realistic: this bill is not a magic bullet to solve all of the problems associated with intercountry adoption that have existed for decades, but it is an important and substantial step forward, and the bill gives hope to families. It gives hope to children without
parents, where no hope previously existed. It is through actions such as these that we show our humanity—where we can demonstrate that we are not prepared to accept the status quo that presently values bureaucracy and red tape over the welfare of children. Never can such a situation be acceptable. We as a parliament must reject it. As I said earlier, there has never been a more important time for legislation of this kind to be put before the House—so that we as a nation can demonstrate to those who inflict hatred and fear upon the world that Australia offers hope and love to those who deserve a better life. There can be no more deserving recipients than children with no parents. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (15:46): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak today for the government's Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014. Last year, the Prime Minister announced that the government would improve overseas adoption by the end of 2014. The government has been delivering on that commitment. There are three categories which well express the foundations of this amendment. These categories are historical, personal—personal in a constituency sense, and humanitarian. These are separate categories, but they are inextricably intertwined.

Intercountry adoption was first practised widely by the United States as a humanitarian response to the situation of European children from Germany, Italy and Greece, orphaned by World War II. In the 1950s, children similarly orphaned or abandoned during the Korean War were adopted by families in the US and in Europe, and intercountry adoption extended to Vietnam in the 1960s, following the Vietnam War. It was not until the Vietnam War that intercountry adoption was practised in significant numbers by Australian families. Subsequently, as interest in intercountry adoption increased, adoptive parent groups established during the Vietnam War began to extend their operations to other Asian countries.

In 2005, Bronwyn Bishop MP was Chairman of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services, and launched that committee's report titled Overseas Adoption in Australia. Two key findings of the 2005 report were: that Australia's per capita rate of adoptions from overseas was less than one-third the rate of most First World countries; and that the Commonwealth, rather than the states and territories, should establish and manage new programs with overseas countries. Furthermore, the 2005 report found that fees in some states were too high, and that rules were needlessly harsh. One Australian state used a Body Mass Index to determine those parents who might be too fat to adopt. Another state required prospective adoptive parents to be fingerprinted. There was also a range of signals from state authorities demonstrating that they did not want people to adopt from overseas. When discussing submissions and evidence received by the 2005 committee, the Chairman also noted that, 'Adoption officials have a great deal of power over adoptive parents. Some parents declined to give evidence because they were afraid it might jeopardise their chances of a successful application.' This is unconscionable behaviour on the part of public servants: putting their personal or professional prejudices—wishes—before the very reasonable and understandable longing of parents wishing to adopt. The Chairman of the 2005 committee added: 'In the area of intercountry adoption, ministers and their departments have been unaccountable for too long. The committee is pleased to redress the balance.'

In June 2008, the responsibilities of the Commonwealth government and of the state and territory governments were set out in the Commonwealth-State Agreement for the Continued Operation of Australia's Intercountry Adoption Programme. This demonstrated that good
intentions prevailed, though—sadly—actual practice lagged behind. Finally, in December 2013, our Prime Minister announced that he would establish a committee to report to him in 2014 with options for implementing reform within Australia over the next 12 months to improve intercountry adoption. The committee was chaired by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. It had senior representatives from the Attorney-General's Department, DFAT, the Department of Immigration, and the Department of Social Services. In April 2014, the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Intercountry Adoption was completed and tabled. One clear term of reference was: 'immediate steps that could be taken for improving and streamlining the delivery of intercountry adoptions to make intercountry adoption easier and faster for Australian couples'. The 2014 report provides both immediate and longer term options for reform. It noted also that the short-term reforms, in and of themselves, are unlikely to see a significant change in the numbers of adoptions. However, they may assist in reducing some of the frustrations that are experienced in Australia.

The Prime Minister noted in May, during the second reading debate for this bill, that he would not pretend that everything was going to be simple and straightforward immediately. However, he did say that this bill will provide 'significant new hope for parents without children, and significant new hope for children without parents'.

With regard to parents, I now address the personal side to my support for this amendment. A constituent of mine, Ms Jo Ellem, contacted me in March this year. In April, I met with Ms Ellem and her husband in my office and heard their story. It took them five years to bring their first child home, and they have now been waiting seven years to adopt their second child.

During the 2005 parliamentary inquiry, Ms Ellem was invited to present to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services, chaired by the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP. The Hon. Julia Irwin MP was deputy chair of the committee. In her covering letter to the report, the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP referred to the diligent and enthusiastic support of her colleagues on the committee, making special mention of two Labor party committee members, her deputy chair, the Hon. Julia Irwin MP, and the Hon. Harry Quick MP. It should be noted that there was no dissenting report to the committee's report.

Despite the committee's agreement and its bipartisan nature, it is Ms Ellem's belief that the findings of that report are still to be addressed. However, Ms Ellem was much heartened by the Prime Minister's statements regarding intercountry adoptions just two days before she contacted me, and she sought my assistance to get her message to him. According to Ms Ellem, most of the nine programs available for Australian couples to adopt are barely functioning, and they all have long waiting times. She and her husband have been told that there is no end in sight. Nevertheless, they continue to explore all options.

Ms Ellem found out about a new program for the adoption of mixed race children being run in Japan. Ms Ellem called Family and Community Services New South Wales—FACS—and asked them if they would ring the intercountry adoptions branch in Canberra to pursue the adoption of mixed race children from Japan. I regret to inform the House that Family and Community Services New South Wales refused to even call the intercountry adoptions branch in Canberra. Ms Ellem was told that, even if they did call and even if the Canberra branch said that FACS New South Wales could decide whether this should happen, FACS would refuse to do so. Rather, FACS New South Wales told my constituents that they should look at...
existing programs in Thailand and the Philippines. Both these countries have waiting periods of four to five years, or even longer. FACS New South Wales told my constituents that it did not have the resources to do otherwise. This was greeted with incredulity by Ms Ellem.

She and her husband have paid a great deal of money to FACS for their adoptions. They do not object to the not inconsiderable fees, but they do object to the fact that their monies appear not to be used as they would or should have been. As already noted, their second adoption has been going on for seven years, and there have been further fees paid for what clearly is little or no facilitation or progress.

As her elected representative, I made formal representations to the Prime Minister, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and to the Attorney-General. Later, I was very pleased to receive an email from Ms Ellem telling me that she had received a telephone call from the Prime Minister's office. Senator Brandis's office had also contacted her. She also had a meeting with the Prime Minister's senior policy advisor on social affairs and has had further communications with the Prime Minister's chief of staff. I am proud to point out that this is a government that, from the Prime Minister down, takes action, seizes the initiative and puts the interests of Australians first.

Finally, there is a humanitarian side to this bill. The history of intercountry adoption is humanitarian—the generous, enlightened and humane response of the United States and of European countries from the 1940s through to the Vietnam War, at which time Australia became more involved, and on to the present day. We pride ourselves as a nation on our enlightened generosity, our charity and our compassion, and we will continue to pursue a humane response to this matter.

MPs involved in the various committees were deeply moved by their experiences during the various inquiries. Their feelings were moved on a number of levels. During the 2005 inquiry, Labor MP Harry Quick said he was deeply moved by his visit to a Chinese orphanage—and understandably so. However, he was also upset that some parents here in Australia felt afraid to give evidence in public in case their chance of a successful application to adopt was harmed. He was quoted as saying:

It is disappointing that we have six states and two territories that are thwarting parents … when there are literally thousands and thousands of young children … who can be placed in loving families, supported far better than they are wandering the streets of countless cities right across the world.

By 2005 Australia's per capita rate of adoptions from overseas was less than one-third the rate of most first world economies. In Australia in 2004, there were 434 intercountry adoptions. In 2010, this number had dropped to 222—a 60 per cent fall. This decline has continued in Australia, with only 129 intercountry adoptions in 2012-2013. This is hardly a magnanimous, charitable and humane approach to a desperate problem which so many generous and loving Australians who want to become parents or who want to complete their families stand ready to alleviate.

There is no decline in Australia in the numbers of couples like Ms Ellem and her husband who want to adopt, yet it would appear that the lack of unification between the states and territories, combined with endless red tape regarding the processing of adoption applications, is preventing Australian couples from applying for overseas adoption.

The 2005 federal parliamentary committee into adoption found that state authorities were biased against adoption generally and appeared, in principle, to be prejudiced against the
practice of adopting children from overseas. The 2014 committee's report received submissions that expressed a continued and significant level of frustration with Australia's current approach to intercountry adoption. Particular issues raised include the quality of states' and territories' administration and level of support, and the cost, waiting times and uncertainty of outcomes.

Our Prime Minister and this government have seized the initiative and have taken action. We have opened a new overseas adoption program with South Africa and are commencing discussions with several other countries about possible new overseas adoption programs.

It behoves us to live up to our values and standards of charity and common humanity and to remain mindful that, in improving the adoption process for prospective parents, the paramount consideration for the government is the best interests of the child. There have been bipartisan efforts on the part of this House to reform. May that bipartisanship continue, and may this bill, as presented by the Prime Minister, be accepted by this parliament. I echo the words of the Prime Minister: the effort we are making in this important area will result in more children who need families and more families who want nothing more than to provide a loving and stable home being brought together. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (16:00): I thank members for their contributions to the second reading debate on this bill. This bill was, as we know, introduced by the Prime Minister, which emphasises his strong personal commitment and the commitment of his government to the reform and improvement of intercountry adoption. I remind the House that the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014 amends the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 to facilitate the grant of Australian citizenship to children adopted by Australian citizens under bilateral adoption arrangements between Australia and countries that are not party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

The bill is a reflection of this government's commitment to reform overseas adoption and to streamline processes to assist parents and their adopted children. The bill gives effect to one of the recommendations made in the report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Intercountry Adoption published in April 2014. It means that children adopted by Australian citizens under bilateral adoption arrangements between Australia and other countries will be able to apply for Australian citizenship as soon as the adoption is finalised. They will then be able to apply for an Australian passport to travel to Australia with their new families as Australian citizens.

The bill seeks to place children adopted by Australian citizens under bilateral arrangements in the same position as children adopted by Australian citizens under the Hague convention. Since 2007 children adopted by Australian citizens under Hague convention arrangements have been able to apply for Australian citizenship in their home country. Countries with which Australia establishes a bilateral arrangement must meet the same standards and safeguards as those required with adoptions made between countries that have ratified the Hague convention. Where a non-convention country meets those standards, the government contends that there is no reason why adoptions should not be recognised in the same way as adoptions contracted between convention countries.

As the process for children adopted under bilateral arrangements, including automatic recognition under Australian law, is in substance identical with those processes under the
Hague convention, it is the government's position that the children should be treated the same in regard to access to Australian citizenship. This was recognised by the interdepartmental committee, which identified this issue as suitable for immediate reform. The government has moved quickly to act on that recommendation.

This bill acknowledges the hard work, dedication and perseverance of Australians who have embarked on the challenging journey of intercountry adoption. They have our admiration and respect. On a personal note I wish to commend all of them for their deep, longstanding desire to be a parent. This is something that goes to the very core of our being. I know the pain that they feel when they have been unable to realise their own dreams of being a parent naturally. The fact that they can get over that personal disappointment—although I suspect that can never occur fully—and then turn around and look at a new opportunity and bring a young life in another place into their own home and take them under their care and treat them as their own is truly an inspiring feat. It is a wonderful thing that we can come together in this chamber, and I am sure as will occur in the other chamber, and pass this bill, which will make that process just that little bit easier. It should not have to be so hard. Certainly, there have to be protections, certainly there have to be proper processes and certainly these things need to be in place. But for all of those parents who want to fulfil that opportunity to be parents, because in their hearts they have always been parents, this gives them the opportunity to take that step just that little bit more easily than it could be done before.

It is the intention of this government, and I am sure all members of the House, that we continue to work on these matters and make these processes and systems more effortless if we ever can. It is work in progress. It is work that is occurring in a bipartisan and multipartisan way in this parliament. Above all, I hope that those who are going through this process see the passage of this bill as an encouragement and an endorsement of what they are seeking to do in their own lives and in the lives of others. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (16:05): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Amendment Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (16:06): Governments ought to do whatever they can to remove onerous regulatory burdens that make it harder for citizens and companies to go about their business. It is a matter of getting regulation right. Business and life are complex enough
without over-regulation. Regulation that is not necessary can be a hindrance to productivity and jobs growth.

One of my proudest achievements as the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport was the delivery of a single national system of laws governing the maritime sector. This was a breakthrough reform—the biggest maritime reform in a century when coupled with the rewriting of the Navigation Act after 100 years, the legislation supporting an Australian shipping industry. This package of legislation with regard to the maritime sector saw more reform occur in that sector than had occurred for many decades previously. It is absolutely vital. As an island continent, Australia relies upon our maritime sector, and too often—because by definition it is off the coast—it does not attract the same attention as our heavy vehicles sector, our roads or our rail sector. But it is absolutely critical for our national interest, for our environmental protection, for our national security as well as for economic growth.

This reform of having a single national maritime regulator through the Australian Maritime Safety Authority became law on 1 July last year. Previously, each state had its own maritime laws—a situation that burdened businesses with regulatory requirements that cost them time and money. In practical terms, it was the case that if you had a commercial shipping operator working in the gulf country between Queensland and the Northern Territory, where they were on the sea would determine whether their ship met the standards that were required by different jurisdictions. Indeed, where they were on the sea would determine whether the person in charge of the ship was permitted to do so, because he or she had to have the registration to undertake those activities in each of the states or territories where that work took place. The fact of circumstances such as the difference between the regulatory burdens placed upon the Gold Coast and Tweed Heads really shows how absurd that was.

Our nation certainly did not need that level of duplication and complexity. We are an island continent, and it simply made no sense to have these multiple jurisdictions. The former Labor government made elimination of regulation one of its main priorities. We delivered an ambitious agenda on reducing regulation, mainly by working with states through the Council of Australian Governments. In this space we delivered not just a national maritime regulator, but also a national heavy vehicle regulator and a national rail regulator. These reforms replaced 23 separate state and territory regulators through these national agencies. Together these changes were expected to save business in the order of $30 billion over just two decades. It took five years of negotiations with states and territories to deliver these changes. For every two steps forward there was one step back when we got to a ministerial council meeting, with particularly state bureaucracies defending their patches with regard to their own separate forms of regulation. It did not make much sense for heavy vehicles or for rail to have separate regulators, but it certainly made less sense when it came to commercial vessels on the blue water, where there are not boundaries that recognise the accidents of colonial history that are our state and territory boundaries.

The bill before us today retains the spirit of these national laws. It simply amends them to sharpen and clarify aspects of the legislation based on the experience of their operation. It was always envisaged that that would be the case. Therefore, the opposition will be supporting this legislation. It will allow the national regulator—the Australian Maritime Safety Authority—to exercise discretion when considering the suspension, revocation or variation of vessel
certificates. The changes are designed to give the regulator greater flexibility to accommodate operational variables within the domestic commercial fleet. They also include minor changes relating to the definition of defence vessels, clarify the regulator's functions, and allow for sub-delegation of powers in some circumstances. I have every confidence in the magnificent job that AMSA does. It is a fine organisation that serves this nation well, whether it be in dealing with defence related issues, with issues of environmental protection or in search and rescue operations. AMSA has shown itself to be well run at a board level, at a management level and at a workforce level. I was very proud to be a minister with responsibility for such an impressive, professional and internationally well-regarded organisation. These changes are non-controversial and sensible. We will be supporting them, and I commend them to the House.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (16:13): Australian produce is generally exported by ship. We are an island nation and, apart from some air freight, the great bulk of our commodities and the vast majority of Australia's international trade by volume travels on the seas. The importance of shipping to modern trade in our economy cannot be underestimated. In 2012-13 Australian ports managed more than $400 billion worth of international cargo and saw some 4,900 overseas cargo ships make almost 14,000 port calls. With this level of activity we cannot afford for this industry, like all industry, to be beset as it has been by the dead weight of red tape and uncompetitive costs.

Under Labor's bureaucratic and protectionist permit system, which was put in place to placate the maritime union, there were almost 1,000 fewer coastal voyages and almost two million fewer tons of freight moved by foreign vessels in 2012-13. Figures released in the report Australian sea freight 2012-13 show that 49 million tonnes of coastal freight was loaded in 2012-13 but that five years earlier, in 2007-08, the figure was over 59 million tonnes. This represents an average 2.4 per cent decline each year in the total weight of coastal freight. In addition, the Australian trading fleet continued its downward spiral. The number of major Australian registered ships with coastal licences declined from 30 in 2006-07 to just 13 by 2012-13. Since the Australian sea freight 2012-13 report, five ships have been added to the fleet. However, over the two years of Labor's failed changes, the deadweight tonnage of coastal shipping has plummeted by 64 per cent.

The protectionist dogma used to justify Labor's reforms did not save Australian jobs on the water and it has literally cost Australian jobs on land. The situation is even more grim when it comes to domestic freight. Between 2000 and 2012, shipping's share of national freight plummeted from 27 per cent to less than 17 per cent. Over the same time, the volume of Australian freight grew by 57 per cent. Projections for 2010 to 2030 see Australia's national freight task growing by a massive 80 per cent. However, while the national road and rail tasks are expected to double, coastal shipping movements are expected to rise by only around 15 per cent. This is due to the uncompetitive nature of sea freight in the current settings. Operating costs, particularly labour arrangements, are uncompetitive when compared with operating costs of foreign ships. We need to fix all of this to build a competitive shipping industry. For example, coastal shipping is bound by regulations where a ship has to wait idle in a port for a day before loading can start. This can cost companies $10,000 to $20,000 a day, and it hits domestic sea freight companies whose costs have been increased by up to 50 per
cent in some cases by Labor's changes. This costs jobs and has the potential to cost a lot more jobs in our mining and manufacturing industries.

The Business Council of Australia estimates that Labor's system has inflicted over 1,000 extra administration hours a year, every year, on the industry to comply with the new system. Thanks to Labor, Australian shipping has become uncompetitive. Shippers are telling the Australian government that container rates from Melbourne to Brisbane are almost twice the cost of those from Singapore to Melbourne, and bulk freight rates on the east-west route have reportedly doubled in the past year. Transporting sugar from Thailand is cheaper than shipping it from Queensland. According to Cristal Mining in my electorate, Australian shipping can cost around $5 million a year more than a comparable foreign-owned ship on comparable routes.

On 8 April 2014 the Deputy Prime Minister released the Australian government options paper on approaches to regulating coastal shipping in Australia. The paper was very well received by industry. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development received a total of 85 submissions and is continuing to receive supplementary submissions and additional information. There is a lot to consider. The submissions highlighted the problems experienced by producers, by manufacturers and by other users of coastal shipping with the current system. The five-voyage minimum requirement before a temporary licence can be granted hinders the ability to move just one-off cargoes by coastal shipping. For example, a piece of heavy machinery was unable to be shipped as a single voyage and therefore a temporary licence could not be granted and the machinery had to be moved by road. That required a police escort, because of the oversize load, and the removal of overhead power lines. Where is the common sense in that? It was more complicated and costly than a voyage by ship. Certain products like LPG are moved exclusively by foreign ships operating under temporary licences. Even though there are no Australian ships capable of carrying the products, the shippers must still obtain licences for the movement of goods—red tape, unfortunately, for the sake of union red tape. It is a costly, time-consuming process that delivers no real value to the Australian economy.

Tolerance limits make the current system inflexible for coastal shipping users. The tolerance limit for the amount of cargo means, for practical purpose, that last-minute changes to cargo just cannot be made, or, if a change has to be made, the ship has to wait—it is delayed while waiting for the change to be approved. These delays can cost foreign vessels around $10,000 a day, and more than $20,000 a day for Australian ships. It is extraordinary. Ships carrying petroleum products from offshore petroleum production facilities are not able to apply for a temporary licence, making it difficult to bring those products directly to mainland Australia. Submissions on the options paper have highlighted cost pressures faced by coastal shipping users. Bell Bay Aluminium indicated an increase in costs from $18.20 a tonne in 2011 to $29.70 a tonne in 2012—an increase of 63 per cent—following the introduction of the current regulations. Compare that with the freight rates offered by foreign vessels, which sat at $17.50 a tonne in 2012. How can an Australian ship be competitive?

Overall, the submissions shared a common goal—to reform the current regulations, to increase flexibility and affordability for the users of coastal shipping and to encourage more coastal shipping. The coalition government is carefully considering these issues and is committed to developing an internationally competitive coastal shipping framework that
enables the industry to operate effectively, to operate efficiently and to operate in the national interest. Surely they are very worthy endeavours. These policies are also impacting onshore. They are having a knock-on effect on land-based Australian jobs and industry. The Business Council of Australia said that around 90,000 Australians are employed in manufacturing sectors that use coastal shipping, including oil refineries, cement, steel and aluminium. The BCA says that restrictions mean Australian firms are paying rates that can be up to double the rates offered by foreign ships, adding tens of millions of dollars to their cost base and making their operations less viable as a result.

There is a critical policy need for more affordable and flexible coastal shipping for major trade-exposed manufacturers that employ large numbers of Australians, especially when that employment is largely in a regional area like my electorate of Forrest. The Port of Bunbury in my electorate is central to the economic growth and development of the south-west region. The major products moving out through the port are alumina, woodchips and mineral sands. The port does not currently have a container-handling facility, despite calls for the development of this capacity for many years. There appears to be adequate cargo within the south-west region as its origin or destination to allow for the development of container-handling facilities; however, the port does suffer from competition with the Perth based Fremantle-Kwinana ports. The Port of Bunbury does need to expand to handle containers, and I am going to keep working on this.

I remember well in 2005 that the state Labor government announced they would build a new gas-fired power station in Kwinana instead of a coal-fired one in Collie. To compensate, they committed $60 million for the Port of Bunbury for a dedicated coal berth to assist coal exports. However, like many Labor promises, it did not eventuate. I find that particularly pertinent today, as a private coal company has been looking to export coal and there is no coal berth. At a time of uncertainty in Collie, as we see in the coal industry, an additional export opportunity that such a berth would have delivered would have been extremely valuable indeed. I support the legislation before the House today.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (16:23): Very briefly, the Greens will not stand in the way of the Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Amendment Bill 2014 passing this House today. However, we do note that there are some matters which we want to pay closer attention to as this bill progresses, particularly those found in section 11 around the delegation of authority and powers that are newly enshrined in this bill and what that might mean for appeal rights. Those matters will be raised and looked at more closely as this bill goes through to the other place.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Ms LEY (Farrer—Assistant Minister for Education) (16:25): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.
Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014
Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Chief Government Whip) (16:26): I rise to speak on the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. I am always keen to speak on bills that are about improving the integrity of our migration system, particularly as they result in enhancing our refugee and humanitarian program. I have always taken the opportunity of emphasising that migration is enormously positive to Australia. The benefits that it delivers are when the migration program is carefully constructed in order to reflect our interests in relation to skills that we might need, in relation to our interests in accommodating genuine and close family reunion but also in relation to enabling Australia to be a generous and supportive country to people who are in need of protection, who are unsafe where they are and who need a resettlement outcome.

The size and dimension of the problem is enormous. There is something in the order of 52 million people who are either refugees or people of concern around the world. As I frequently remind people as we talk about these issues, Australia cannot take them all. The idea that we should is, I think, naive. It prompts you to look very, very closely at the way in which we deal with border protection issues, because they go to the whole question of whether or not some people whose needs may not be as great are accommodated in terms of advantage for them over those who have a greater need. This has always troubled me enormously.

I have been speaking at some gatherings fairly recently where I emphasised my own personal engagement in something like 41 years of public life. I can say that because today is the 41st anniversary of my election to parliament—

Mr Gray: Congratulations!

Mr RUDDOCK: 22nd September 1973. When I first came here—you may not think about it—I spent time visiting refugee camps. I went first to Traiskirchen in Austria. It is a place where I became aware that the United States said that anybody who runs away from a communist country must be a refugee, so we have to resettle them. We had a gentleman called Ceausescu, who took the view that this was an ideal time to empty his jails. It was probably appropriate that we should have been asking some important questions about who it might be that we would be resettling: people who were genuinely opposed to the regime or those that the regime did not in fact want itself.

Later, I spent some time in Cambodia. I went to the Cambodian border with Thailand and saw many of the camps there. I went to Vietnam, but I also had the opportunity of seeing Vietnamese in places like Pulau Bidong. Come into my office and you will find a framed picture carved out of a packing case sent to me by a refugee, who later settled in Australia. I went to Whitehead detention centre, in Hong Kong. I went and saw the Afghans in Pakistan. I spent time later in the Balkans, focusing on what was happening to people from Bosnia, from Croatia and from Serbia. Sometimes the Serbians, even though they had been evicted from parts of Croatia, were not seen as having a need for resettlement, and they clearly were.

I had the opportunity of going to Africa. I went to Kakuma, the camp in Kenya. What that demonstrated to me was that there were people who were out of sight and out of mind living
in some of the most appalling circumstances. Nobody was focused on trying to help them and work out a way of dealing with their circumstances. Yet it seemed to me that they might well be people who, in a properly constructed refugee program, you would want to settle and support.

What that meant for me was that I frequently focused on those people who were unsafe where they were, those who had no prospect of being able to return home, and asked how their circumstances were going to be resolved. It meant that as I later came across groups of people who were free enough to travel, with the money and resources to be able to engage people smugglers—organised crime—who may well have a sound claim for refugee status, but in many circumstances if you ask yourself who would you want to help, it would be the person the refugee camp with nowhere to go and not the person free enough to travel who was making Australia a destination of choice.

That brings me to this bill we are discussing, Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. It is about examining and looking at the integrity and efficiency of our onshore protection status-determination regime. It is about ensuring that the people whom we have to consider, because of the refugee convention we are party to, have claims that we consider are substantial and real. I have to say that I think there are many people, and I meet them frequently, about whom you would say that the only refugees they have ever met are those people who say to them, in Australia, 'I am a refugee, and it is my claim that ought to be the most important.' I think, and I have believed this for some time, that there are people who come through that process, supported by very well-meaning Australians, encouraged by members of my own profession, to look at their claims in absolutely minute detail to establish whether there is any possible way that you can actually get them through the system. Their claims are being given priority.

These measures are about improving the integrity of that system. If I could point to some of them. There are measures to put responsibility on asylum seekers to help us in assessing their claims—to put responsibility on them to put before us complete information and to be up-front about it. These measures are to apply to all asylum seekers, regardless of their modus operandi. Specifically, the bill amends the Migration Act to make clear that it is an asylum seeker's responsibility to specify the particulars of their claim to be a person in respect of whom Australia has protection obligations and to provide sufficient evidence to establish their claim. You may think this is surprising. But I am aware of circumstances in which people will come here and say, 'I am an asylum seeker,' and expect us to disprove it, without telling us any of the circumstances that give rise to their claim to enable it to be adequately examined. It seems to me that for people who are saying, 'We want to be taken by you because you have a protection obligation in relation to us,' it is not unreasonable to require them to provide us with sufficient evidence to establish that claim.

The bill also creates grounds to refuse a protection visa application when an applicant refuses to establish their identity, nationality or citizenship. I ask myself what have you got to hide if you do not want to show me the documents on which you might have travelled—the documents that might tell me where you have come from, where you have been and also might tell me what other countries have examined your entitlement to establish who you are and what view they have formed in relation to these matters. I know the reason people get rid of documentation. It is because they take the view that if we find they are not a refugee we
will not be able to prove who they were and where they were from, and send them home. I think that is why a lot of the lawyers tell them that it is not a bad thing to get rid of your documentation. It is certainly what the people smugglers tell them. They will not know where to send you if you are found not to be a refugee. I do not think it is unreasonable to require people to have their documentation with them, and if they have not, to put on them the obligation to tell us why they do not. This provision creates grounds to refuse a protection visa application when an applicant refuses or fails to establish their identity, nationality or citizenship, and does not have a reasonable explanation for doing so, including when an applicant provides bogus documents to establish their identity or either destroys or discards such evidence. Those factors are to be taken into account.

The bill also clarifies when an applicant who applies for protection visa, where a criterion for the grant of a visa is that they are a member of the same family unit of a person who engages Australia's protection obligations, is to make their application for a protection visa. It is to put on them a requirement to make their application separately for a protection visa.

The point that I make is that this legislation is intended to improve the integrity and consistency of decision making to prevent exploitation. This legislation is intended to improve the integrity and the consistency of decision making in, and to prevent exploitation of, the protection visa determination process, including the merits review system, by applicants not genuinely pursuing a claim. This is something that is of concern to me and it has to be run with integrity. These amendments will put responsibility back on asylum seekers, and I do not think that is unreasonable.

I make the point very strongly that these amendments are about ensuring continued public confidence in Australia's capacity to assess claims for asylum and to support community expectation that claims are made in good faith. I suspect that, properly applied with some other measures that the government is seeking to implement, what we will see is fewer claims for protection. Provided we are not sending a person who is a refugee with well-founded fear of persecution back to possible persecution, what it means is that we will be in a better position to protect those people whose claims would never be before us.

I think this bill is completely consistent with our obligations under the Refugee Convention and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and also those that deal with torture. We treat our international obligations seriously, but we want to ensure that we do not allow those who advocate in these matters—those who want to establish a unique Australian jurisprudence that gives people an advantage—to achieve their objective.

In my view, privately arranged application assistance can be sought by any person claiming protection in Australia. Vulnerable asylum seekers, such as unaccompanied minors, people with disabilities and survivors of torture and trauma, will obviously be helped in presenting their claims. This is not about depriving people of the opportunity to have their matters dealt with properly. Those who arrived lawfully and who are disadvantaged or who face financial hardship may be eligible for assistance with their primary application through the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme. This is not about ensuring that people who have proper claims do not have them considered within the context of the framework of law. This is about ensuring greater integrity. I congratulate the minister on bringing these issues forward. I am sure the legislation will put in place a more effective protection system when it is enacted.
Mr MARLES (Corio) (16:40): I rise to speak on the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. Australia has a proud tradition of offering humanitarian protection to those who face persecution and danger in their home countries. To ensure that Australia is able to offer protection to those in need, we need to have a robust and efficient framework for governing the way in which we make decisions about who qualifies as or who is established to be a genuine refugee. It is important that we continue to look at that process, update it and make sure that it is as tight as possible, which is what this bill seeks to do. In the process, it is also important that this should be done in a way which does not distinctly disadvantage those who have genuine claims to protection. This bill seeks to address various aspects of the protection framework embodied in the Migration Act 1958. In principle, Labor supports the bulk of this bill. But Labor does have concerns regarding some of the proposals contained within this bill, which will lead us to make amendments when this is dealt with in consideration in detail.

Firstly, the proposed changes in schedule 2 to the existing complementary protection framework lowers the threshold and potentially puts people at risk of being returned to a situation where they may face serious harm or death. In our view, this is an unacceptable proposition which Labor cannot support, and on that basis we will be moving an amendment to remove schedule 2 from this bill. Secondly, in schedule 4, the provisions in item 17 are a distinct watering down of the current requirement of the Refugee Review Tribunal to give a written decision whenever an oral decision has been given. This puts the applicant in a position of needing to request a written decision and, therefore, in a position of a distinct disadvantage within that system. While we support the bulk of the bill, as long as these provisions remain within it, we will not be able to support the bill as a whole.

In saying that, I want to go through the specifics of the bill to indicate Labor's position. The bill has four schedules. The first schedule, in turn, contains four broad provisions dealing with the regime around making decisions on people's refugee status. The first issue, which is dealt with in schedule 1, goes to the applicant's responsibility in relation to protection claims. Schedule 1 inserts a new section 5AAA. This makes it clear that the onus of proving a claim for refugee status lies firmly with the asylum seeker applicant. Currently, there is no provision within the Migration Act that explicitly states the onus of proof when a claim is made, and it does not specifically provide that that onus of proof lies with the applicant, although, in effect, that is how the system has always acted in practice. It is, of course, in the best interests of the applicant to provide as much information as possible to substantiate their claim for protection. Making that an explicit requirement makes eminent sense.

In saying that, I want to go through the specifics of the bill to indicate Labor's position. The bill has four schedules. The first schedule, in turn, contains four broad provisions dealing with the regime around making decisions on people's refugee status. The first issue, which is dealt with in schedule 1, goes to the applicant's responsibility in relation to protection claims. Schedule 1 inserts a new section 5AAA. This makes it clear that the onus of proving a claim for refugee status lies firmly with the asylum seeker applicant. Currently, there is no provision within the Migration Act that explicitly states the onus of proof when a claim is made, and it does not specifically provide that that onus of proof lies with the applicant, although, in effect, that is how the system has always acted in practice. It is, of course, in the best interests of the applicant to provide as much information as possible to substantiate their claim for protection. Making that an explicit requirement makes eminent sense.

The second area which seeks to be changed in schedule 1 relates to the consequences applying to those who fail to establish their identity or, indeed, use bogus documentation. Schedule 1 will amend section 91W and insert a new section 91WA. As the legislation stands, a decision maker can draw an adverse inference where no documentary evidence of an applicant's identity is available. However, it is not currently a ground for refusal. The amendments provided in this bill will impose a duty on the minister to refuse an application for a protection visa if the applicant refuses or fails to comply with a request to provide documentary evidence and does not have a reasonable explanation for refusing or failing to comply with that request. Similarly, if an applicant provides bogus documentation around evidence of their identity, nationality or citizenship, or if the minister is satisfied that the
applicant has destroyed or disposed of that documentary evidence, the minister is obligated to refuse the application, unless the applicant has a reasonable explanation.

It is important to note in this particular part of the bill that the refusal power will not apply where the applicant does have a reasonable explanation—for example, where an applicant is stateless—and either provides documentary evidence of their identity or has taken reasonable steps to obtain such documents. Provisions around the establishment of identity is important. Provisions around providing genuine material is important in the system as well. We accept that this is a proposition which is worthy of support.

The third area which this schedule seeks to deal with is the question of application for protection visas by family members. Schedule 1 inserts a new section 91WB to put beyond doubt that an applicant for a protection visa who is a member of the same family unit of an existing protection visa holder cannot be granted a protection visa simply on the basis of being a member of the same family, unless they apply before the protection visa has been granted to the original protection visa applicant. As the act currently provides, a family member of a protection visa holder has an automatic ability to be considered to be owed protection simply by virtue of being a member of the same family without having to be assessed individually. But this new section will amend this so that if a person seeking protection does not apply at the same time as the primary applicant, or at least before the primary applicant's claim for a protection visa is itself granted, then they will have to lodge an application for protection in their own right or go through the process of family reunion, as would occur with any permanent visa holder. For example, if someone marries a protection visa holder years after the time they were granted protection, under the proposed changes they will not be considered to be in need of protection by virtue of the fact that their partner has a protection visa. It is important to note that these changes only apply to applicants who are already in Australia. Again, that is a proposition which we see as having merit to be supported.

The fourth aspect in which schedule 1 seeks to amend the Migration Act is in relation to the consequences which exist when information is not raised in relation to all evidence at the earliest opportunity. Schedule 1 inserts a new section 423A which encourages all information to be provided at the earliest opportunity. When an applicant seeks to raise new evidence, section 423A requires the Refugee Review Tribunal to draw an inference unfavourable to the credibility of new evidence where the applicant does not have a reasonable explanation to justify why the evidence was not presented to the primary decision maker. That, in Labor's view, is a fair proposition. Again, this is not a substantial change from current practice. As we understand it, the change will restore this to the original legislative intent and put Australia in line with other like-minded countries including the US, New Zealand and the UK.

As I have outlined, in supporting the measures contained in schedule 1, we do have one caveat and that is to examine the process, which is being undertaken by the Senate in relation to this bill, and to look at the way in which each of these provisions applies. Subject to that, our view is that schedule 1 deserves support. However, as I indicated at the outset we are concerned about schedule 2.

Schedule 2 seeks to insert a new section 6A which makes clear that the threshold for complementary protection claims would shift from people proving they have a real chance of significant harm if they are to be returned to the country from which they have fled to a test
where they would be more likely than not to experience harm. That is obviously a higher threshold that needs to be achieved in order to invoke the complementary protection provisions of the legislation. In our view that could potentially result in people being returned to a situation in their home country where they do face persecution. On that basis, Labor will not support a weakening of this threshold where death or serious harm could result in the event of someone being returned to their home country.

We should remember that the complementary protection legislation regime deals with people who would not otherwise qualify as refugees, pursuant to the definition which is in our legislation by virtue of the refugee convention, but may qualify for protection based on other international instruments to which Australia is a party, such as the convention against torture. The sorts of instances which have been cited as invoking complementary protection that would not otherwise invoke the protection that is provided under the refugee convention are circumstances where people may face honour killings or where women may be returned to a situation where they could become subject to female genital mutilation.

When we are talking about consequences as significant as that, we believe that increasing the threshold before being able to invoke the provisions of that legislation is a concern. The changes proposed in this schedule are of such concern to Labor that we will not be supporting this bill while the changes to the complementary protection regime in schedule 2 remain a part of this legislative package. We will seek to amend this bill when it is considered in detail.

Schedule 3 deals with an amendment relating to the statutory bars that preclude the making of visa applications. The changes in this schedule are intended to streamline the operation of statutory bars and support the management of visa applications and, in the process, support the way in which our detention facilities are managed and, indeed, people are managed into community detention.

Changes to section 46 ensure that an unauthorised maritime arrival in Australia who is an unlawful non-citizen, a bridging-visa holder or holder of a temporary visa will be prevented from making a valid application for a visa unless the minister determines it is in the public interest to do so.

The explanatory memorandum to this bill states:

Most unauthorised maritime arrivals and some transitory persons who arrived in Australia before 19 July 2013 have been granted a temporary safe haven visa and a Bridging … visa … under section 195A of the Migration Act.

Under the current framework, anyone with these visas would be subject to three provisions that prevent them from making a valid application for a visa. These are: section 46A that applies to unauthorised maritime arrivals, generally; section 46B for transitory persons; and section 91K that applies to those with a temporary safe-haven visa. This change will ensure that unauthorised arrivals will only be caught by the section 46A bar and not both the section 46A and section 91K bar.

This has not been a problem in the past; however, temporary safe-haven visas have been used by the department, most recently, instead of issuing permanent-protection visas. This will streamline the operation of statutory bars applicable to unauthorised maritime arrivals and transitory persons. Importantly, these changes do not expand or change the minister's existing powers, under section 46A or 46B of the act, to make it a determination to lift the application bar in relation to an unauthorised maritime arrival or a transitory person. The
changes only affect applications made by unauthorised maritime arrivals and transitory persons after the amendments commence. They do not affect the validity of applications already lodged with the department.

The effect of these provisions will be to streamline the way in which this process operates, in respect of those people who are here awaiting their refugee-status determinations to occur. It will more efficiently enable the system to deal with those who are in refugee-detention centres and in community detention. For that reason, Labor believes there is merit in the amendments contained in this schedule.

Schedule 4 relates to the Migration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal processes and administration. The changes will enable the principal member of the tribunal to issue practice directions to applicants and their representatives and issue guidance directions to other members of the tribunals. It is important to note this is consistent with practices in other Commonwealth merits review tribunals—for example, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. It will also enable the tribunals to dismiss an application when an applicant fails to appear after being invited to do so, although it is important to note that the tribunals will have a power to reinstate the case if requested by the applicant within a specified period and, indeed, it is appropriate to do so.

In schedule 4, however, Labor does have a specific concern with item 17, which relates to circumstances where the tribunal's decisions are given orally. Right now, there is a requirement when a decision is given orally to subsequently provide a written decision to an applicant. Item 17 will have the effect of amending the legislation to make that requirement only applicable when there has been a request by the applicant for a written copy of the decision.

Labor will not support this change, because we believe this effectively is a watering down of the current requirements of the tribunal and may even potentially deny procedural fairness to applicants during the tribunal process. This is particularly the case where we have people who do not necessarily understand English and where advice may be difficult to obtain. On that basis, we believe it is absolutely essential that there is, as a right, an ability for every applicant to have at least the decision around their refugee-status determination provided to them in writing so that they have the best opportunity to take whatever steps they may want to within our system.

In conclusion, while Labor does support the general intention of this bill, in seeking to streamline and improve the processing efficiencies within the Migration Act—and we do believe that much of the bill will achieve that end and is worthy of support—we will not be supporting the bill in its current form so long as it includes both schedule 2 and item 17 of schedule 4. On that basis, we will be opposing the bill at the second reading speech but will be seeking to amend the bill, to remove those provisions, when it is considered in detail.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (16:59): I rise today to speak on the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. I acknowledge the contribution made by the member for Berowra. He has extensive experience and knowledge in this area and it is good to see he is supporting this bill.

This bill, which amends the Migration Act 1958, will make changes to the way asylum seekers are assessed. The amendments the bill makes to the Migration Act are necessary to
ensure the protection and determination system is as efficient and fair as possible. In particular, the amendments aim to strengthen the importance placed on establishing the identity of the applicant and the cooperation of the applicant throughout that application process. Their implementation will further assist the government in guaranteeing that only those with genuine claims to asylum receive a place under Australia's protection system.

The government is proud of Australia's protection program for the role it plays in giving thousands of people every year, who are unable to remain in or return to their home countries for fear of persecution of violence, the opportunity to settle in Australia. In 2014-15, the government will again ensure that 11,000 of the 13,750 places in the humanitarian program are for people overseas in need of resettlement, including 1,000 places reserved for women at risk and their dependents and 5,000 places for people proposed by close family under the Special Humanitarian Program. By stopping the flow of unauthorised boat arrivals, the government has been able to revive the Special Humanitarian Program, which has seen thousands of people resettled in Australia. This year alone, 4,400 places will be offered to Christians fleeing persecution in Iraq and Syria.

I am pleased to speak today on a bill which will ensure that those who genuinely require Australia's assistance will continue to receive it. Schedule 1 of the bill contains amendments making it undeniable that the responsibility for establishing identity and claims for protection lie with the applicant. It is not the job of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection nor of the Refugee Review Tribunal to establish a case for the asylum seeker. Despite what those opposite and those on the crossbenches may say, this shift in responsibility will align the Australian system with that of the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. I know the shadow minister, the member for Corio, just said that Labor does support the bulk of this bill but will oppose the second reading and move to make some amendments.

The importance of an applicant's identity when processing a visa application cannot be overstated. For protection visa applicants their nationality, citizenship or ethnicity may bear direct relevance as to whether or not they engage Australia's protection obligations. Under these amendments asylum seekers who refuse to provide, or to take reasonable steps to provide, documents to establish their identity will be refused a protection visa. As the minister noted in his speech, an applicant who will not cooperate with the government to establish their identity should not receive a protection visa. In accordance with the renewed emphasis on the establishment of identity these amendments to 91W, and the introduction of 91WA, will see those who present bogus documents refused a protection visa unless they can prove they have a reasonable explanation for presenting them and can then provide, or take reasonable steps to provide, genuine documents.

Attempting to limit the use of bogus documents will continue to increase the integrity of the immigration process and limit the profitability of a trade which, like people smuggling, is the work of criminals who prey on vulnerable people. Similarly, those who destroy or dispose of their documents prior to arrival in Australia who do not have a reasonable explanation for doing so, and who do not take steps to establish their genuine identity, will be refused a protection visa.

I believe the Australian public deserves to be able to take comfort in the knowledge the government knows the true identity of all those wishing to make Australia their home. This is
of particular importance given the growing threat of terrorism from around the globe. It was only last week that Australians woke to the news of the largest counter-terrorism operation ever to take place in Australia and the gruesome details of proposed terror attacks in Sydney and Brisbane and here at Parliament House. These attacks were to target innocent individuals and were designed to spread fear throughout the community. While this threat was a result of home-grown terrorism, it would be foolish for anyone to deny the existence of noncitizens who would seek to harm Australians and the freedoms we cherish if given the chance. It would also be foolish to suggest, given the threat of terrorism and the potential risks dangerous individuals pose to Australia, that the establishment of an applicant's true identity is not of vital importance.

In addition to requiring an asylum seeker to establish their identity these amendments will also require them to present as much information as possible in their initial claim for protection through the introduction of provision 423A. If an asylum seeker fails to do so they risk the Refugee Review Tribunal drawing an adverse inference about the credibility of their protection claim, if they raise a new claim or new evidence at the Refugee Review Tribunal for the first time.

This amendment will assist in seeing claims processed as quickly and fairly as possible, allowing the genuine asylum seekers to progress through the application process faster. Most importantly, this amendment seeks to stop those who are not genuine refugees from exploiting the Refugee Review Tribunal by presenting new claims or evidence at this stage and delaying the final decision process, sometimes for considerable lengths of time, as these claims are examined.

As always, the government has included safety nets for those who cannot provide documentary evidence of their identity or who will struggle with their primary application for a protection visa. For example, unaccompanied minors or those who are genuinely stateless and cannot provide evidence of nationality may have their claims assessed without the appropriate documents if the reasons for not providing documentation are consistent with the known facts regarding their home country. Additional assistance may be available to asylum seekers who arrive lawfully, and who are disadvantaged or face financial hardship, through the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme.

Similarly to the pride we have in our protection program, the government is proud of Australia's comprehensive and fair family migration program. We believe that this is the appropriate path under which family reunion should occur.

This bill, through the addition of section 91WB to the Migration Act, will clarify the government's position so that members of the same family unit who were not included in an application or did not make an application prior to the granting of a protection visa, cannot be granted one on the basis of being a member of the same family unit as a protection visa holder. That does not mean that members of the same family unit cannot be granted a protection visa. It simply means that they will need to make a protection visa application and prove that they, in their own right, engage Australia's protection obligations.

The introduction of 91WB is necessary in order to prevent any potential abuse of Australia's protection program in the interests of family migration. It is also aimed at stopping the illegal arrival of those who expect to be granted a protection visa due to a family member holding one. Again, whilst those opposite may protest, I would like to point out that there is
no right to family reunification under international law and that, as previously stated in the case of family reunification, the family migration stream is the most appropriate pathway.

As a signatory to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Australia is required to abide by a number of non-refoulement obligations. Schedule 2 of this bill inserts section 6A into the Migration Act to clarify that the threshold to be satisfied when considering complementary protection claims as a part of a protection visa application is restored to 'more likely than not'. The threshold was altered in March 2013 when the full Federal Court interpreted the complementary protection provisions in a way the government believes is not reflective of Australia's protection obligations.

The aim of restoring the original threshold is to ensure that an applicant is not found to engage Australia's protection threshold when they are not entitled to it. Again, it is about ensuring that genuine asylum seekers can access places in Australia's protection program. Despite the success of the government's border protection policies in stopping boats there remain a number of unauthorised maritime arrivals with protection visa claims to be processed. Schedule 3 contains amendments relating specifically to the ability of unauthorised maritime arrivals to make a valid visa application. The amendments will remove the possibility of unauthorised maritime arrivals being subject to multiple sections of the Migration Act by broadening the application of section 46A. This will ensure that unauthorised maritime arrivals who are unlawful non-citizens, holders of a bridging visa of a temporary protection visa will be prevented from making a valid visa application unless the minister determines it is in the public interest for them to do so.

These amendments will also apply to transitional persons to ensure that they are treated consistently with unauthorised marine arrivals. As with the other amendments I have discussed today, these amendments will result in greater efficiency in the processing and management of visa applications. The amendments in schedule 4 of the bill will improve the consistency and the processing and administrative efficiency of the Migration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal by strengthening the powers of the principal member, permitting the acceptance of an oral statement of reasons from members, in the case of an oral decision, and granting the Migration Review Tribunal and Refugee Review Tribunal the power to dismiss an application as a result of an applicant failing to appear before the tribunal after being invited to do so.

The tribunals will also have the power to reinstate an application that has previously been dismissed due to failure to appear. In summary, the amendments contained in this legislation will allow the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to easily identify and respond to those who attempt to falsely engage Australia's protection obligations. They will encourage increased integrity and efficiency in the processing of both on-shore and off-shore protection claims whilst ensuring that Australia remains safe and that only those with genuine claims for asylum have access to protection visas. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (17:12): I speak on the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. Generally, Labor support the intent of the bill, which streamlines the processes and efficiencies associated with processing claims for asylum. In terms of the whole of the bill, Labor supports schedule 1. We have reservations
regarding schedule 2, and item 17 of schedule 4, which I will detail throughout the course of this speech.

The Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014 seeks to restore integrity and efficiency to the protection and processing framework, as well as restore the original legislative intent of particular sections of the Migration Act following some judicial decisions. The bill aims to increase the efficiency of processing visa applications and streamline the assessment of protection claims.

As I mentioned, in terms of schedule 1, Labor is supportive of the provisions contained within the bill. In particular, the two new sections that have been inserted in schedule 1, section 5AAA, that makes it clear that the onus of proving a claim for refugee status lies firmly with the asylum seeker applicant. There is currently no provision in the act that explicitly states that the onus of proving a claim lies with the asylum seeker. However, it has always operated in that manner in practice. It has always been in the applicant's best interests to provide as much information as possible to substantiate their claim and application.

Section 423A encourages all information to be provided at the earliest possible opportunity. This change will apply regardless of whether the decision is administrative, before the Refugee Tribunal or a ministerial intervention. This is not a substantial change from current practice, and the changes will restore the original legislative intent, and also put Australia in line with other like minded jurisdictions including the US, New Zealand, and the UK. In terms of schedule 1 part 2, this amendment relates to documentary evidence of identification for someone claiming protection. It amends section 91W and inserts new section 91WA. Currently the decision maker can draw an adverse inference where no documentary evidence of an asylum seeker's identity is available. However, it is not grounds for refusal. This amendment will allow refusal of an application by an asylum seeker who refuses or fails to provide evidence of identity, nationality or citizenship; who provides a bogus document; or who destroys documents intentionally relating to their identity. The refusal power will not apply where the applicant has a reasonable excuse—for example, where an applicant is stateless or where reasonable steps have been taken to obtain such documents.

Part 3 of schedule 1 inserts new section 91WB to put beyond doubt that an applicant for a protection visa who is a member of the same family unit or an existing protection visa holder cannot be granted protection simply on the basis of being a member of the same family unless they apply before the protection visa has been granted to the original protection visa applicant. Currently, if someone is a family member of a protection visa holder they are automatically considered to be owed protection by virtue of simply being a member of the same family without having to assess the claim individually. This results in family members of protection visa holders being advantaged over those who apply through the non-family stream. This amendment will restore the original intent of the legislation and these measures will improve processing and streamline the efficiency of the act. They really do codify what is occurring in practice both through common law decisions and through the principles that are applied in terms of practice notifications at various levels and in different jurisdictions.

Of particular concern to me is schedule 2 of this proposed bill, which Labor will not be supporting. As the shadow minister mentioned earlier, when the bill moves to the consideration in detail stage Labor will seek to move an amendment to have this schedule
removed in its entirety. The reason for that is that this schedule inserts a new section 6A which makes clear in cases of complementary protection that it is more likely than not that the applicant will suffer significant harm if they are removed from Australia. This proposed change to the risk threshold is a higher threshold than that which currently operates at the moment and, importantly, it will introduce a higher threshold than is contained in international agreements. Most notably, in the refugee convention, the wording is a 'real chance' of significant harm. This reform will change that threshold and will change that test that is applied for someone seeking protection in Australia to more likely than not that the applicant will suffer harm if they are removed from Australia.

This change has caused considerable alarm amongst the community, with stakeholders such as the Refugee Council of Australia expressing alarm that under this bill people fleeing torture or other forms of serious harm will have to prove that there is a greater than 50 per cent chance of being harmed to avoid being returned to their home country. So the asylum seeker now has a 50 per cent threshold that they need to get over; they need to prove that they will be harmed beyond that threshold if they are going to be afforded protection. It is a clumsy test. It is inconsistent with international agreements that Australia is a signatory to, and on that basis is does not have my support or the support of the Labor Party.

The Refugee Council has expressed alarm regarding this. The council has said:

Making these kinds of presumptions is unfair and out of touch with realities of forced displacement. When people are fleeing persecution, many are not able to obtain or travel safely with their own identity documents, as doing so could allow them to be identified by the very people from whom they are fleeing.

The Refugee Advice and Casework Service has also expressed its opposition to this aspect of the bill, while the University of New South Wales' Professor Jane McAdam and the Australian National University's Kerry Murphy have stated:

Overall, the bill … is designed to reduce adherence to Australia’s international legal obligations and make it easier to refuse refugees on technical grounds. … This bill underscores that the driving force in Australian refugee law will be punishment, not protection.

Tony Wright of the Sydney Morning Herald put it brilliantly when he wrote that the government was playing a dangerous game with the lives of people who are desperate enough to seek asylum in the face of threats to their lives in their homelands. He wrote:

Applicants for asylum on the basis of fear of torture must establish, under his proposal—under this immigration minister's reforms—

that there is more than a 50 per cent probability that they will be subjected to [torture, to harm] or even death if returned to the country they have fled.

In short—

Tony Wright of the Sydney Morning Herald said—

if there is a mere 49 to 50 per cent chance of escaping being hung by one’s thumbs from meat hooks while being thrashed by a length of electrical flex, that’s good enough for Mr Morrison. They can be sent to whatever fate might await them.

No doubt Mr Wright's comments are a particularly graphic account of the horror that might be visited upon some desperate and poor people, but such is the unworkable nature of this amendment.
Until now, those seeking asylum have escaped the indignity of being made to prove that the possibility they would return home to face the prospect of significant harm was in fact a probability. A 10-per-cent chance of torture upon return has, in some cases, been deemed sufficient. As Mr Wright put it, a one-in-10 probability of being reduced to a whimpering bloodied mess might not sound particularly attractive to those possessing a heart, but it was deemed to constitute a real chance. On that basis, Labor has difficulties with schedule 2 of the bill and, as I said earlier, we will move an amendment during the consideration in detail.

In terms of schedule 3: this amendment removes the need to grant temporary safe haven visas and enables people in detention to be moved into the community on a bridging visa. The introduction of a statutory bar to unlawful noncitizens' bridging visas and other temporary visa holders will enable increased efficiency of processing and management of caseloads by expanding the basis for getting people out of immigration detention. On that basis, I will support schedule 3.

In terms of schedule 4: these are amendments that seek to streamline some of the processing and administration of the Migration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal decision-making processes. They will enable the principal member to issue practice directions to applicants and their representatives and to issue guidance directions to other members of the tribunal, similarly to other jurisdictions in Australia where practice directions are widely used and which, no doubt, provide excellent guidance to advocates, claimants and those working within the system, and also to members of tribunals through the guidance directions.

Item 17, which relates to written reasons being given for oral decisions, is something that Labor has a difficulty with. Currently, if an oral decision is given then there is a requirement for a written statement of reasons for that oral decision to be provided to an applicant. The amendment contained in this bill will seek to change that and the written reasons will only be given if there is a claim or a request made for those written reasons. That is a change that Labor is opposed to. We do believe that it impinges on the notion of procedural fairness and providing adequate reasons for decisions. Again, amendments will be moved during the consideration in detail.

Labor's approach to this bill is based on our guiding principles associated with migration and asylum seeker claims: compassion, fairness, and generosity. A fundamental maxim is that this country should not harm people who are claiming asylum and who are seeking to flee persecution. On the whole, we support these amendments to improve the efficiency, the streamlining and the operation of our migration legislation. But we do not support amendments that make things unreasonably difficult for people who have genuine claims for protection, who are genuinely fleeing difficult situations throughout the world and seeking protection from Australia—to have unnecessary and burdensome tests applied to their applications. That is exactly what schedule 2 does, and that is why we oppose that amendment to this bill. But, on the whole, the bill is supported.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (17:27): I am pleased to rise and speak on the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. I would like to start my comments by saying how honoured I am to speak in this debate following the member for Berowra, given that it is actually the anniversary of his 41st year in our federal parliament. We are honoured and lucky to have someone in this parliament of such immense experience—someone who
was a long-time immigration minister under the Howard government and someone who served as our nation's Attorney-General for many years—to have someone of that experience, who younger members of parliament such as myself can take counsel from and learn from. I am very pleased to be able to follow him in this debate.

When it comes to the issue of our nation's migration and refugee policy the very first question we need to address is: do we have a policy of open borders? Can we have a policy where anyone who actually turns up can come and stay? I would like to reflect on a story that my wife's grandfather told me.

He migrated to Australia after the First World War. He lived here all his life; he paid his taxes and worked. When he was in his 80s my wife's father decided he would take him back home to England and went to organise to get him a passport. They put the applications in and when they went to the migration department they found that, even though he was in his 80s and he had lived in the country for almost 60 years, the department had no record of him actually come into this country. They asked him, 'Go back to when you first arrived in Australia—what happened? What process did you go through?'

He said that he simply turned up on the boat at circular Quay. He walked down the gangplank and there was no-one there, so he went on his way. He stayed in the country and worked for 60 years and then, of course, had difficulty getting a passport.

But the world has changed and those times have changed. Today we have over 50 million people around the world who would qualify as refugees. We have enormous differences with the living standards here and the social security benefits that are available to Australian citizens that are not available to billions of others in the world. We also live in a time of international terrorism, where there are those who do not like us or our beliefs and wish to do us harm. So in today's world it is completely unrealistic for us to have an open border policy on migration. Therefore, we need to set a limit on the number of people who can come to Australia. It will never be large enough. There will always be more people who want to come here than we can provide places for. We need to set a process of selection. That is what this bill helps to achieve.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the member for Cook, on how successful he has been in closing down the people-smuggling trade. During the election, we had the line 'stop the boats', but what we wanted was to close down the people-smuggling trade. If we went back 12 months ago, I think there would be very few of us who could have imagined the success that the minister for immigration has had. He has had absolute success in closing down a diabolical trade. By closing down that trade, the minister for immigration has saved hundreds of lives. He has restored the integrity to our immigration system. There has also been savings of billions of dollars of costs to the Australian taxpayer. But what is most important is that he has successfully freed up thousands of places under the Special Humanitarian Program. In fact, 4,000 places were freed up in the last financial year, there will be another 4,000 places freed up this year and there will be thousands more places freed up in years to come because of the minister for immigration's success. We know that many of those places will go to those persecuted minorities in the Middle East who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to come and settle in Australia.
I will now get on to the provisions of the bill. The Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014 amends the Migration Act 1958 and implements a range of measures which increase the efficiency and enhance the integrity of the onshore protection status determination process. The measures in the bill support an effective and coherent protection determination process which responds to the challenging domestic asylum seeker landscape.

There are 12 individual provisions, and I would like to take the opportunity to go through each one. Firstly, this bill clarifies that it is the noncitizen and not the minister who has the responsibility to specify all particulars of a protection claim and provide sufficient evidence to substantiate that claim. It is a simple process that everyone must agree to.

Secondly, the bill creates grounds to refuse a protection visa application where an applicant refuses or fails to establish their identity, nationality or citizenship and does not have a reasonable explanation for doing so. Again, I think this is a proposal that everyone would accept.

The third thing this bill does is create grounds to refuse a protection visa where an applicant provides bogus documents to establish their identity or either destroys or discards identity evidence or has caused that evidence to be destroyed or discarded. This is an important provision. We have heard many stories of asylum seekers flying into Indonesia with their travel documentation, getting on a boat in Indonesia and then destroying those documents on the way to Christmas Island. In fact, it has been documented that the people smugglers would encourage people to destroy their documents. This provision in this bill makes sure that, if someone destroys their documents or provides bogus documents, that person will have an adverse finding against them.

The fourth provision clarifies that a family member of a protection visa holder cannot be granted a protection visa on the basis of being a family member if they applied after the initial visa was granted. Again, this is a provision which I am sure everyone would agree with.

The fifth provision provides that the Refugee Review Tribunal must draw an unfavourable inference with regard to the credibility of claims or evidence that are used for the first time before it if the review applicant has no reasonable explanation to justify why those claims and evidence were not raised before the primary decision was made by the department. Again, it puts the onus back on the applicant to make sure they put everything up-front, and they must have a reasonable explanation if they have not done so.

The sixth provision clarifies Australia's interpretation of 'the likelihood of harm' and the types of harm necessary to engage Australia's non-refoulement obligations which will apply to certain protection obligation determinations made under the act, the regulations, administrative processes and so forth, irrespective of whether the assessment is conducted as a result of a visa application.

The seventh provision changes the test for assessing complementary protection claims and raises the requisite threshold for return.

The eighth provision broadens the operation of the statutory bar that precludes unauthorised maritime arrivals from lodging valid visa applications by providing that the unauthorised maritime arrivals who have been granted a bridging visa or a prescribed
temporary visa will also be precluded from applying for a visa. Again, this is something that is needed in the bill to make sure that we have much more efficient and stronger protections.

The ninth provision broadens the powers of the principal member of the Migration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal to issue practice directions to applicants and their representatives, including migration agents and legal practitioners, about the procedures they are to follow in relation to proceedings. This is a simple procedural change that gives the principal member of those tribunals more authority and power, enabling them to run those tribunals more efficiently.

The 10th provision broadens the powers of the principal member of the tribunals to issue guidance decisions which members of the tribunal must comply with unless satisfied that the facts or circumstances of the decision under review are clearly distinguishable from the guidance decision. Again, this is a simple method to improve the efficiency of the running of these tribunals. The eleventh provision is to:

...enable a Tribunal Member to provide an oral (as opposed to a written) statement of reasons when they make an oral decision...

The final one, the twelfth provision, is that they enable the Migration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal to:

...dismiss an application where an applicant fails to appear before the Tribunal after being invited to attend.

It is a simple list of 12 changes to our Migration Act, which will simply increase the efficiency and enhance the integrity of that onshore protection status determination process. I commend this bill to the House, because it will provide effective and coherent protections in our determination process and it deals with the current challenging domestic asylum seeker landscape that this government is currently dealing with.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (17:38): I sincerely hope that Australia remains a stable, peaceful democracy where no one here ever has to feel that their safety is so threatened that they have to flee. I hope that no one in Australia ever feels that their life or their family's lives are at risk, such that they might have to put whatever they can into a bag in the middle of the night and flee—using whatever means they can—to get out of the country. I sincerely hope that no one in Australia ever has to live through a war in this country that might see orderly systems of migration stopping and them having to turn to whoever they possibly can to smuggle them out the country to save their own life and their family's lives.

If any one of us in this country ever found ourselves in danger, if any one of us in this country ever found ourselves worried that our family members or people close to us might be in danger themselves and if we were forced to flee and go to knock on the door of another country, we could not in all good conscience ask them to take us in given that this is what we are doing in this bill to people who are coming here seeking our protection. Under this bill, we now have the very real likelihood that Australia will take some of the most vulnerable people in the world—who are coming here seeking our help, who have experienced war, who have experienced persecution and who have experienced torture—and we will send them back into danger. This is not only morally repugnant in its own right but it breaches international obligations that we have signed up to. It seriously compromises the integrity of our rigorous protection determination system and it erodes procedural safeguards and it puts Australia at
risk of breaching our non-reformat obligation, which is the obligation not to put someone back in harm's way.

What we know is that people who arrive on our shores seeking protection are extremely vulnerable. They have often experienced persecution, trauma and torture. But the amendments in this bill presume that the person who arrives on our doorstep is lawyered up, has all the resources available to a Liberal party donor and backer and are able to hire this country's best legal minds to go and represent them in a now very narrowly prescribed tribunal system. There is absolutely no evidence that the integrity of our current system is at risk or is in any way compromised in its current functioning, but what this government is doing is what it usually does whenever it finds itself in political trouble: it turns on refugees, it turns on the vulnerable and it turns on those who are least able to defend themselves and it attacks them.

This bill will have incredible adverse impacts on those in the world who most need our help. How does it do that? One of the things it does is that it alters the burden of proof. The amendments proposed by the bill state that the burden of proof will rest solely on the applicant to prove:

…that they are a person to whom Australia has protection obligations…

And that sufficient evidence must be provided in the first instance to establish that claim. On one reading and on the face of it, it sounds reasonable—of course someone has to prove their case. But what anyone who has paid the slightest attention to what happens in reality would know or even if you just think about it for a moment, someone who arrives here who is a genuine refugee may have nothing with them and they are almost certainly not going to have a fine, detailed knowledge of Australia's migration law.

That is why the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees states:

…while the burden of proof in principle rests on the applicant, the duty to ascertain and evaluate all the relevant facts is shared between the applicant and the examiner. Indeed, in some cases, it may be for the examiner to use all the means at his disposal to produce the necessary evidence in support of the application.…it is hardly possible for a refugee to “prove” every part of his case and, indeed, if this were a requirement the majority of refugees would not be recognized.

That makes perfect sense. Someone who turns up here may not speak English, almost certainly will have no idea about the finer points of Australian migration law and may not have a dollar to their name, yet this government is saying, 'It is now your job to front up and prove every single aspect of your case, otherwise we will consider sending you back.' To add insult to injury, this comes on top of this government cutting funding for legal advice to these very same people.

Mr Randall: Hear, hear!

Mr BANDT: In this budget that we have just seen, these people who are now expected to prove every element of their case are not going to have access to legal representation. I hear a member opposite shouting, 'Hear, hear,' because these people are not going to have access to legal advice. If they are genuine refugees, surely they are the kind of people who are turning up with nothing in their pockets.

Mr Randall interjecting—

Mr BANDT: The member interjects, 'What about my genuine constituents?' Let me tell you, my genuine constituents—and, indeed, one in four in this country—were not born here
or have parents who were not born here. The suggestion that somehow genuine refugees are not genuine constituents is offensive, and it shows exactly what is behind this government's motivations. David Manne, the CEO of the Refugee & Immigration Legal Centre, said:

It is often very difficult for people in those circumstances to understand what is required and how to present it. That is why the conventional position in international law and under our system is that the duty of establishing claims, the duty of listing those claims and evaluating them is a shared duty between the applicant and the decision maker.

That is point 1 of this offensive bill.

Point 2 is increasing the risk threshold to 'more likely than not'. Let us pause and think about this for a moment because it bears significant examination. What this bill proposes to do is significantly increase the risk threshold for people who are fleeing harm. Under the proposed amendments, asylum seekers will have to prove that they have a greater than 50 per cent chance of being tortured or killed. If you have only a 49 per cent chance that someone is going to put a gun to your head and kill you if the Australian government sends you back, the Australian government will be allowed to send you back under this bill. Even if there is a 40 per cent, a 30 per cent, a 20 per cent or a 10 per cent chance that you are likely to be killed or tortured when returned, under these amendments that will now be enough to have you sent back. That change is in direct contravention to international and human rights law, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as the principle of nonrefoulement.

The amendments proposed refer to people who are seeking protection on complementary grounds—that is, people who are not captured by the refugee convention but are still deserving of protection as they are fleeing serious harm such as torture, honour killings or female genital mutilation. These are the people who are relying on this protection that is there at the moment. So a woman who arrives here, who may not speak English or have had formal education, and is seeking our help will now be sent back if she can prove that she is only at 49 per cent risk of female genital mutilation. That is what this government is proposing in this bill. As stated by Mr Manne from the Refugee & Immigration Legal Centre:

... the proposed 'more likely than not' test would ultimately significantly increase the risk of Australia making the wrong decision on whether or not somebody should be protected from serious harm. The test raises the real prospect of returning people to persecution or other forms of life-threatening harm, in violation of our non-refoulement obligations. That is the bottom line here.

This unacceptably high threshold is at odds with our international obligation, which is the lower threshold test that has been well established and applies in comparable countries like the UK and New Zealand.

Point 3: if somebody arrives here with wrong documentation or no documentation and are unable to prove their identity, under this bill the application for protection will be denied. That just plainly ignores the reality of someone who is seeking asylum and goes against the basic principles of the refugee convention. As has been made very clear through the inquiry process into this bill and elsewhere, there are many reasons why people are unable to obtain identity documents or may not have the correct documentation when they arrive in Australia.

I do not know whether members opposite have had any practical experience in assisting people in their electorate trying to bring family members here or with their own migration
claims, so this may come as news to them, but there are some countries which do not have a robust, democratic government and accountable bureaucracy. Someone who has fled the police will now be asked to go back. The police may be the only authority in that country who is able to issue you any documentation at all, so the same people who want to kill you may be the only ones who can give you this precious piece of paper that the government is now saying stands between you being accepted as a genuine refugee and not. It may also be the case that you just did not have time to get the documentation before you left. When your life is threatened, which is one of the instances in which you would be found to be a refugee, you may not have time to gather everything together and get that piece of paper that up until now you have never had any reason to hold.

As was raised by one of the submitters to the inquiry, these amendments contravene article 31 of the refugee convention, which prohibits governments from penalising refugees who arrive without authorisation. Mr Webb stated:

… the refugee convention recognises what these reforms ignore—that is, the basic legal and moral duty to protect a person is not diminished just because that person arrives without certain paperwork or with fake documents. It should be up to the tribunal to assess in each instance whether the fact that you have come with the wrong documents or no documents means that you are not a genuine refugee. It should be up to the tribunal to assess if you are trying to put one over on the system here and are not a genuine refugee versus saying: 'There is a completely legitimate reason why in this instance you have no piece of paper at all. I can see that your life was threatened.' This bill says: 'Enough of that. We don't care.' This bill says, 'Those people who have a genuine reason are treated like everyone else and now the door is shut to you as well.'

We know that this bill also contains changes with respect to family reunion, to the Refugee Review Tribunal's processes, with respect to new claims and to retrospection. But, fundamentally, this bill must be opposed because it is yet another instance of this government saying: 'When you are someone who comes here seeking our help we will turn our backs on you. We will turn our backs on you and we are quite prepared, in all good conscience, to say that if you have a 49 per cent risk of being killed, we are happy to send you back to where you came from.' That is not the kind of Australia I want to live in. I want to live in the kind of Australia where if someone has a genuine fear for their life and that person can meet the test to prove they are a genuine refugee then we welcome them in. I do not want us shutting the door on people who may have had to flee in the middle of the night in fear of their life or their family's lives, but that is what we are about to do so this government can try and seek a bit of a bump in the polls.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (17:53): I am very pleased to speak on the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. I could spend my whole time talking about the contribution from the member for Melbourne. We are in the position here today of having to put integrity back into our migration system because the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government allowed our migration system to become so dysfunctional, thanks to the way they were compromised by the Greens. It was Kevin Rudd, the then prime minister, who, with migration minister Chris Evans, pulled the successful Pacific solution off the table and, to appease the Greens, Julia Gillard allowed it to be further dismantled—it was as though, if you could get here, you would get a visa. That is why they came without any identification; all
they had to do was get here. That is what the Greens in conjunction with the Labor Party did. Remember that in 2007, when the Labor Party took over, there were only four people who came by boat in detention.

When the Labor Party left, not only did we have thousands in detention, but we now have 30,000 in our community who cannot be processed because Kevin Rudd put a moratorium on processing Afghans, Iraqis and Sri Lankans for a while, but it was all too hard and so they let them go into the community. Now the Greens and Labor in the Senate will not allow us to fix that situation. There are 30,000 sitting in the community without the ability to work. They rely on the Salvation Army and other charity groups to feed them. Wouldn't they be better off as functional members of our society doing some work to support themselves, rather than relying on charities and taking the support away from Australians doing it hard? It is unconscionable that someone like that Green from Melbourne can stand in this place and say, 'What we are doing here today to fix this is wrong.'

The Labor Party feels sheepish about it too. The other day when the migration minister Scott Morrison got up and gave a report after 12 months on how many boats had arrived and the number of boats that came under Labor, the member for Corio, the opposition's spokesman on migration—instead of being gracious and saying, 'That's fantastic; thank goodness someone has come to fix this system'—said, 'Oh, yeah, I suppose it's all right, but there's a long way to go.' There is a long way to go, but there has only been one boat in that time, and we are working through the backlog at the detention centres. At the end of the day, if the Labor Party did not work with the Greens in the Senate, we could deal with the backlog of those 30,000 stuck in the Australian community who are leaching the support from charity groups. They could be working under a protection visa if they were found to be genuine refugees. Do not come in here and try to wax lyrical about how concerned you are to fix up the system—you were the wreckers, the maniacs, in charge of this system in conjunction with the Greens that put us where we are today.

The member for Melbourne talks about legal aid. I had to interject, and he had to respond to me. Let me say that my constituents struggle to get legal aid. I have people who are in real trouble—low-income earners who cannot afford a lawyer when they have a Family Court problem. I have fathers who are having to walk away from their children because they cannot get a lawyer to go to Family Court with them. Yet if these people arrived under the previous regime—and we are tidying up the process in this bill today—or under the obligations to conventions that the member for Melbourne talks about, we are obliged to provide lawyers to them so they can go to court. They go through every level of court—the Magistrate's Court, the Federal Court, the High Court and then they go to the Migration Review Tribunal—and each case requires a lawyer. Not every lawyer does it pro bono. I can tell you about the plane loads of lawyers, who were heading up to Christmas Island under the previous government, were making an absolute poultice out of the Australian taxpayers from legal aid. We are putting a stop to that.

It really does gall me to stand here and witness the crocodile tears coming from the other side. The member for Melbourne rudely and cruelly says that members on this side would not know what it is like to assist those with migration issues. Let me tell you, Deputy Speaker, that one person in my office spends most of his time on migration issues. We are doing a lot better now that we are in government, because the Labor Party would not help us before—in
fact it was difficult even to get the local migration office, except for a few good men and
women, to help us; the office had been told not to have much to do with us. I had not been
into the migration office for about four years until the other day, when I went to meet the new
head in Western Australia. Thank goodness she met me and she is helping me with some
issues. We spend an enormous amount of time trying to connect people who have been
stranded, or who are trying to come here on spouse visas. A Mr Harati, an Iranian, came here
and was granted a visa under protection because he was under threat of being killed. He had
proven that under our regime—so much for the tough testing. Mr Harati is beside himself,
because his daughter was stranded in Malaysia. She ended up over there, and she could not
get to Australia, and her Iranian husband flew in the dead of the night and took their child
back to Iran. The daughter is stranded in Malaysia, his other daughter is in Australia; and they
are all enemies of the state in Iran. So—because he is the sort of father that he is—Mr Harati
went back to Iran to try and rescue his daughter and her child. He has now been locked up. He
is now in jail in Tehran because he was trying to do that. We are trying to help him. So I am
surprised to hear the member for Melbourne say to those on this side, 'What are you doing to
help people with migration issues?' We spend a massive amount of time trying to help people
with migration issues, because the system is too skewed one way. The fact is that under the
Labor Party regime, it was 'if you could get here, you could stay here' stuff. All those people
that are stranded in refugee camps around the world are doing the right thing, and trying to
support themselves—some of them have been there for tens of years; some of them have had
a whole family while they have been stranded in the camp, because they cannot go home—
because they would be killed. Talk about being able to prove protection! They would be
killed. We have just had the case last weekend, where 70,000 people from Syria fled from
ISIS across the border into Turkey. They will be in a camp for a long period of time now.
There are a million people in Jordan in camps now, fleeing from ISIS. They are the people
that are seeking protection. We could take every one of those under this refugee convention.
But under the previous regime, if you had enough money and you could pay a people
smuggler, you would get to Australia.

This bill is asking you to prove your bona fides. First of all, it is asking you to prove that
you have some documents. You know, most of us here have come back to Australia from
overseas. What happens when I get to the airport, as an Australian citizen? I have to show
them my documents. I have to show my passport. I have to fill in that part of the visa that tells
me where I have been, how long I have been away, and how much money I have got. Imagine
me turning up to the Australian airport, even as a member of parliament, and saying, 'Sorry, I
haven't got any papers—let me in; I am Australian and, by the way, I am worried that if you
send me back to the country I came from, I will be persecuted.' Some of the threshold tests—
and we should lift the threshold tests on these matters—have been too weak. I have mentioned
it in this place before. Two Indian gays, for example, who were allowed to stay in Australia
under these former conditions, because they said that if they went back to India, they would
be persecuted. Well, they got to stay here—the burden of proof obviously worked on that
occasion.

Just recently I was in Malaysia, and at the time there was an article written in the Sri
Lankan newspapers about the 43 people that were on a boat off Sri Lanka, and claiming that
they would be persecuted if they returned to Sri Lanka. Most of them were Sinhalese, not the
minority Tamils, and they eventually were taken ashore, and they were allowed to go home.
And how do I know this? Because I met with the UNHCR in Kilinochchi, and I met with the IOM, the International Organization of Migration, who help resettle these people. They say that they are just the agents. They say, 'we are paid to resettle them and there are no issues'. They go back home; they have not got a lot of money—except if Australia gives them that $3,000 to $10,000 to go. But they have generally spent their money on a people smuggler.

So why wouldn't we increase the burden of proof? Why wouldn't we ask the Migration Review Tribunal to ask them to attend? That was one of the stunts, or strategies, used by people smugglers and their agents in the community—the Mr Rintouls of this world. They told them: 'Oh, just don't turn up to the MRT, because if you don't, then you just get to stay here, and if they can't find you, you can stay for quite a while.' So that was one strategy. The explanatory memorandum states that this bill would 'allow the tribunal to dismiss an application if the applicant fails to appear before the tribunal after being invited', and if the applicant fails to appear after a set period of time. How fair is that? We have asked them to appear and then, if they don't appear, we ask them to appear again, and after a set period of time they still don't appear. It also says the bill will 'make a technical amendment to put beyond doubt when a review of a decision that is that has been made is considered to be finally determined.' It has got to come to an end. You cannot have it open-ended. You have all these complications: 'Oh, the child was born in Australia,' or 'Is the child an Australian citizen, or is the child a citizen of the country of the parents?' So these are very good arrangements that we are putting into place.

The member for Melbourne seemed to have a problem with the 50-per-cent rule. Well, 50 per cent in this life is about the average probability of proof. It was ten per cent; now we are lifting it to 50 per cent. In most legal cases and precedents, you have to have a lot better than a fifty-fifty chance of winning. I wouldn't mind that sort of chance of backing the horses: a fifty-fifty chance to get my money back; I think my wife would be very happy with me! But at the end of the day, we need to put integrity back into this process, by making sure that the obligations are met. But this bill would give the Refugee Review Tribunal the ability to bring into question and 'to draw an unfavourable inference with regard to the credibility of claims' by an applicant, and it would permit the department 'to refuse a protection visa application when an applicant refuses or fails to establish their identity, nationality or citizenship' or fails to have an explanation for doing so. And we know that. We have now got so-called refugees who have returned to their countries and who have said, 'Oh, look, we were told that once we got through Indonesia'—because, as we know, they did not have to have the proper documentation to get into Indonesia because they were Muslims, and they gave special consideration to Muslims entering Indonesia; but they had to have enough documentation to say who they were, because they were staying there while they were waiting for a boat—and 'once we got on the boat, we had to make sure our documents went over the side'. And it did not just happen on boats—everyone thinks this is all about boats. On the planes, people arrive and flush their documents down the toilet. You cannot get on a plane in any decent airport in this world unless you have travel documents, including a visa. Suddenly, people get to their destination and they do not have travel documents, passports or visas. Where have those documents gone? We know where they have gone: down the latrine. So they get to their destination and they say, 'Look, we didn't have any documents.' It is just a strategy.
Australians do not like people who push their way to the front of the queue. See what happens if you are at the checkout at the shopping centre and somebody barges past you, knocks you out of the way after you have been lined up in a long queue and says, 'Sorry, I'm in a hurry; I want to go first.' It is not the Australian way. Yet this is what some of these people try to do.

I finish by saying that unless we get the support of the Labor Party to stop the wacky Greens from continuing their mantra and dragging the reputation of this country’s migration system down, and unless we bring integrity back into the system, we will be a laughing stock. That is what has happened to Italy, for example. As soon as they relaxed their policies, they got the problem that we have, which we are fixing.

Mr Giles (Scullin) (18:08): That was a very strange pitch for Labor Party support from the previous speaker. I rise to make my contribution to the debate on the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. I note that this bill amends aspects of the protection framework within the Migration Act 1958 in order to assist in improving the rate of processing protection claims. The bill also purports to improve the integrity of the framework within which assessments are made.

As the member for Corio foreshadowed, Labor will move amendments to this bill to deal with certain aspects of the bill. In particular, the amendments remove schedule 2, which relates to the important matter of complementary protection claims, from this bill. I support this critical amendment.

I also note that this bill has been referred to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, which is due to report today. I was unable to look at this report before coming into the House a few minutes ago, but I do look forward to reviewing its findings. I hope that they will advance a proper consideration of this bill in the other place—a consideration that perhaps could properly have occurred in this place. Although I should say that I welcome the fact that the member for Corio, the shadow minister, was afforded a briefing on this bill by the department.

This bill obviously cannot be isolated from the wider debate that we are having about immigration and, in particular, Australia’s obligations towards those seeking asylum. It raises difficult questions that are not best-advanced through assertions and inflammatory language such as the reference made by the member for Canning to 'so-called refugees' which we heard moments ago. Assertion and inflammatory language can be no substitute for evidence and principles, which should be the cornerstones of our approach to these very difficult issues.

I have said before in this place that I struggle with many of the questions that this debate raises; I am sure that many members on all sides of this House do. We obviously live in a very changing world, as debates in this place have demonstrated in recent months. What this tells me, though, is that the debate around how Australia behaves in an increasingly fractious and difficult world full of vulnerable, displaced people is a debate in which there can be no room for triumphalism. Rather, there needs to be a commitment on all of our parts to grapple with the full range of this challenge, a challenge which is of course not confined to Australia—far from it.

I am deeply troubled by aspects of this bill and I am not standing here today to take at face value all of the minister's assertions that it is in accord with our humanitarian obligations. In
fact, I found the minister’s repeated claims that this bill will restore integrity to our asylum seeker processing system curious, to say the least. In particular, he concluded his second reading speech by saying:

This bill deserves the support of all parties. We need the tools to ensure public confidence in Australia’s capacity to assess claims for asylum in the interests of this country, and against the interests of those who show bad faith. These changes uphold the importance of integrity, the establishment of identity, and increased efficiency in our protection processing system.

Let me say that there are many elements of this bill that are unobjectionable and achieve worthwhile purposes, but these statements deserve, in my view, much closer examination. Leaving aside the rather striking omission—to my eyes at least—in the objectives of the need to do justice in each case to those seeking asylum, as a whole the minister’s claims cannot be supported. The case for the matters set out in the legislation before us has simply not been made out. It is important to note that this bill includes provisions that, firstly, erode significant procedural and substantive safeguards, and that, secondly, downgrade our compliance with international obligations which are maintained by this present government. The provisions potentially include the refusal of protection applications for technical reasons. This sits uncomfortably—at the very least—with our international protection obligations. Perhaps we could all pause for a moment to think about the consequences of getting one of these decisions wrong on technical grounds.

While there are non-controversial matters before us in this bill, the concerns that I am setting out are not minor concerns. Of course, this is not just about us. I note the very recent comments setting out the broader context of this debate by the incoming UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein. In his first speech, he went out of his way to criticise some Australian policies as leading to a chain of human rights violations including arbitrary detention and possible torture following return to home countries. This gives context as to how we are seen, which is of course critical if we are to achieve any regional solution to this terrible problem and warrants very careful attention.

Fundamentally, detention and punishment do not equal protection, just as efficiency and integrity are not always coterminous. As we strive for efficiency—as we must, as the minister has rightly said, in Australia's national interest and in the interest of individual asylum seekers—we cannot ignore integrity in matters which so often go to questions of life and death.

I turn to schedule 2 of the bill, which seeks to raise the risk of harm threshold from what it presently is—a real chance—which requires a real and not a far-fetched or fanciful possibility, but can be as low as 10 per cent, to a 'more likely than not' test, which would require a balance of probabilities test involving more than a 50 per cent chance of suffering harm. This is, in the view of expert practitioners in the field, the imposition of an unacceptably high threshold of risk assessment and it is at odds with well-established standards in international law and the test in comparable jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand, contrary to what has been asserted by the minister. These are considerations which are especially important again when regard is had to the consequences. Of course, the principle of non-refoulement is at the cornerstone of international refugee protection and expressed unequivocally in article 33(1) of the 1951 convention, which
prohibits a state from expelling or returning a refugee in any manner whatsoever to territories where his or her life or freedom would be threatened for a convention reason.

I note that a substantial body of case law has essentially harmonised the test in the 1951 convention of there being 'a well-founded fear' and the Migration Act's present 'real risk' of significant harm under complementary protection grounds. Despite this legal consensus, in his second reading speech the minister stated:

It is the government's position that the risk threshold applicable to the non-refoulement obligations under the Convention Against Torture and the ICCPR is 'more likely than not'.

According to Jane McAdam from the University of New South Wales, 'This bill invites decision makers to reinvent the wheel rather than encourage them to draw on the wealth of jurisprudence that has developed around these human rights principles internationally.'

Once again, the minister has declined to explain why these changes are necessary. He simply asserts that 'this is an acceptable position which is open to Australia under international law and reflects the government's interpretation of Australia's obligations'. These are weasel words. On the other hand, there is, finally, established case law that resolves any uncertainty by harmonising the definitions between international and domestic law, yet the minister is seeking to rip this up for no apparent reason.

The test for refugee protection under Australian law has, since 1989, been a 'real chance' test. There is no sound reason why different tests should be applied to what is ultimately the central question under both refugee and complementary protection—that is, whether a person is at risk of serious human rights abuse. This must be the test going forward. It is as simple as that. That is why Labor's amendment to schedule 2 is so fundamentally important. It is a matter of life and death.

I turn now to schedule 1, which of course goes to a non-citizen's responsibility in relation to protection claims and where very significant changes have been made. Firstly, proposed section 5AAA seeks to clarify that, going forward, the burden is to rest solely with the noncitizen to specify all particulars of their claim that they are a person to whom Australia has protection obligations and to provide sufficient evidence to establish such claims. This burden is imposed on a noncitizen who claims to be a person in respect of whom Australia has protection obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1984 Convention against Torture.

Whilst I of course share this government's concerns about people who are not genuine in their claims of asylum, I do not think it can be fair to collectively punish any person seeking asylum because of the wrongdoing of some, particularly given the paucity of evidence before us. I note that the minister's second reading speech fails to provide much in the way of hard evidence of wilful wrongdoing by those seeking asylum. I accept that, as with anything, there are always people who do the wrong thing, but this is about the fairest way to deal with all of those seeking asylum, including those—the vast majority—who have done nothing wrong.

In this regard, I note the statement by the Refugee Council of Australia, which has expressed alarm that under this bill people fleeing torture or other forms of serious harm will have to prove that there is a greater than 50 per cent chance of them being harmed to avoid being returned to their home country. I note again that the member for Canning seemed pretty relaxed about these sorts of odds and compared them to horse racing. I think that is not a fair
comparison, to say the very least, when we think about the matters that we are concerned with here. The Refugee Council is also opposed to the changes, which it says would also allow the government to deny a protection visa to people who refuse or fail to establish their identity without a reasonable explanation. It asserts:

Making these kinds of presumptions is unfair and out of touch with realities of forced displacement.

When people are fleeing persecution, many are not able to obtain or travel safely with their own identity documents, as doing so could allow them to be identified by the very people from whom they are fleeing.

The Refugee Advice & Casework Service and legal academics and commentators have similarly expressed concern over the majority of the proposed changes in the bill. For instance, Professor McAdam and Kerry Murphy have stated:

Overall, the bill degrades refugee protection under Australian law. It is designed to reduce adherence to Australia’s international legal obligations and make it easier to refuse refugees on technical grounds … This bill underscores that the driving force in Australian refugee law will be punishment, not protection.

However, the Handbook and guidelines on procedures and criteria for determining refugee status issued by the UNHCR states:

… while the burden of proof in principle rests on the applicant, the duty to ascertain and evaluate all the relevant facts is shared between the applicant and the examiner.

It is a shared duty, and common sense tells us that that must continue to be the case.

I note that this section enables the minister to request further information that he or she considers relevant to the assessment of a visa application. But of course it is very difficult to see how this would work in places that are remote with people who have no resources available to them. Often, again in a practical sense, people come seeking asylum with only the clothes on their backs. How are they supposed to adduce items requested by the minister, assuming he does so in any event? These provisions could result in refusal of protection based solely on identity or other documents, without addressing the significant legal question of whether a person is at risk of persecution. A person could be expelled to face persecution purely because of adverse findings about identity documents. How can this be said to be consistent with Australia’s non-refoulement obligations?

The fact that so much power resides with this minister is something I and others have previously taken issue with. I know the former minister was deeply troubled by this as well. The notion that a minister should play God instead of there being an administrative law based assessment goes to the core of this problem. This is a fundamental issue that must be addressed.

I also turn very briefly to schedule 4, and in particular to item 17, to raise a particular concern about those matters that are going to change in tribunal processes. Item 17 was touched on very effectively by the member for Kingsford Smith, and let me say this: I share his concerns that go to the difficulties of having oral reasons only in tribunal determinations, for three reasons. Firstly, applicants—many of whom do not speak English or do not speak English terribly well—may struggle to understand the reasons and then to obtain advice. Secondly, this would diminish transparency and accountability on the part of this important body. Thirdly, it would clearly have the effect of restricting rights to judicial review.
I echo the words of the member for Kingsford Smith, who in his contribution to this debate said that compassion, fairness and generosity should be the hallmark of our approach. It is clear that the bill before us does not meet those tests, and nor do they make a clearly stated case for change. This bill, as a whole, makes major changes which carry very significant—indeed, grave—consequences for asylum seekers. The impact on integrity and on efficiency is unclear to say the least, and I ask this: what are the markers for efficiency when the stakes are so high? I support the amendments moved by the member for Corio.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (18:23): I rise to speak in support of the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. Not having spoken on such matters in the past 12 months, I saw this as an opportunity. As the member for Canning pointed out, in 2007—for those who can remember back that far—there were only four people in detention in Australia. After six years of Labor and the Greens and 50,000 boat arrivals in this country, we are dealing with a situation and a legacy that was left to us during that infamous period in our history—the dismantling of proven policies that worked, and the situation that we now have. Indeed, it was a commitment that this government went to the Australian people with. We believed that we could stop the boats. We believed that we could, with the right policies in place, put the people smugglers’ business out of operation. I guess that is what I have always struggled with: what gives somebody who has the capacity to pay a people smuggler $10,000, or whatever the going rate might be in Indonesia or somewhere else, more opportunity or more right, if you will, to start a new life in Australia compared with somebody who has spent 10 years in a refugee camp in the middle of Africa—in Darfur, for example, or in recent times in places like Syria or parts of the Middle East? I struggle with that, and it is in that context that I grapple with the notion that we could have dismantled policies that had a structure around our immigration intake into Australia.

I absolutely acknowledge that beyond this period when we have processed those people who are currently in detention that there is a serious discussion that needs to take place in this country about the numbers of and the proportion of immigration that we have in this country. I look at the demographic challenges that face us in this nation. In 1965 there were 10 Australians of working age for every person aged over 65; today there are five and in 2050 there will be 2.8. These are real challenges that we have, and our immigration policy is going to be one of those parts of the legislation of our nation that aims to deal with that.

But Australia is indeed a nation of immigrants. Many seek to become, but never succeed in becoming, citizens of this great country. The changes proposed to the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014 were indeed necessary when immigration minister Morrison introduced them back in June this year. Establishing the identity of someone seeking to become an Australian citizen would seem to most Australians of reasonable disposition to be not only a prerequisite but a fundamental and basic requirement. Perhaps the events of recent weeks are a reminder not only of the privilege it is to be a citizen of this great country but also of the obligation that comes with being an Australian citizen. It is truly dreadful to learn that more than 60 Australians are currently fighting with terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria, with more than 100 helping to finance these deadly acts. Today the Prime Minister has reiterated that Australians who join terrorist groups abroad are committing a serious crime, and if they return home they will be arrested, prosecuted and jailed.
In this climate, I think the immigration minister's moves to change the ways that asylum seekers are assessed have particular resonance. They will give the Australian public confidence in its government's capacity to assess all asylum seekers to our country with enhanced integrity through a range of enhanced measures. We need to feel confident that those who are found to be refugees are in fact who they say they are. These amendments will make it clearly the responsibility of a person who comes to this country seeking protection to establish their own claims to be a refugee and to do so at the beginning of the process. Under the amendment bill, which applies to all asylum seekers regardless of their mode of arrival, greater clarity will be given to the Migration Act 1958 that requires asylum seekers to provide and substantiate claims in relation to protection visas. It enables the Refugee Review Tribunal to draw an unfavourable inference about the credibility of claims or evidence raised by a protection visa applicant for the first time at the review stage. It enables the refusal of a protection visa when an applicant refuses or fails to establish their identity, nationality or citizenship and amends the framework in relation to unauthorised maritime arrivals and transitory people who can make a valid application for a visa.

The bill makes it clear that it is not the responsibility of the immigration department or the Refugee Review Tribunal to make a case on behalf of an asylum seeker. It will put Australia on par with other countries including the United States, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The government acknowledges that there will always be a small number of vulnerable individuals, including unaccompanied minors, who might not be able to clearly present their claims without help. There will continue to be arrangements in place to help these particular individuals.

As part of these proposed reforms, provision will also be introduced to enable the Refugee Review Tribunal to question the credibility of a protection claim where an asylum seeker raises a claim for the first time without having a reasonable explanation about why the claims or evidence were not raised before the primary protection visa decision was made. Establishing an applicant's identity is a keystone of making a decision to grant or refuse any visa. This is especially the case for protection visa applicants because their identity, nationality or citizenship can have a direct bearing on whether they utilise Australia's protection obligations. Identity in the global age is increasingly complex to determine and many people hold dual or multiple nationalities or may seek an advantage from not disclosing their genuine identity. It is reasonable as a government to take a precautionary approach if an applicant is suspected of misleading authorities. Under these proposed reforms, presenting bogus documents for the purposes of establishing identity will result in refusal of a protection visa application unless the applicant has a reasonable explanation for presenting them and either provides documentary evidence or takes reasonable steps to do so.

The same applies to an applicant who has destroyed or discarded identity documents—which has been a common practice among those who have entered Australia illegally in recent years. Under the current government, an applicant who destroys documentation could reasonably expect a significant delay in the processing of their application—something which I think Australians would understand and see as quite reasonable. It is appropriate to refuse a protection visa when an applicant fails, or refuses to comply with a request, to establish their identity where it is possible for them to do so. But, again, these new measures also respect the fact that in some circumstances it may not be possible for a protection visa applicant to...
provide documentary evidence of their identity, nationality or citizenship. These changes will acknowledge, understand and respect such circumstances.

This bill will repeal the 90-day rule which has been in effect since 12 December 2005. It will remove both the 90-day time limit for deciding a protection visa application before the department and the Refugee Review Tribunal as well as associated requirements for reports to be tabled in parliament giving explanations for those decisions which were not made within the prescribed time-frame. Without wanting to put too fine a point on this, the burden in recent times on our departmental processes has, as most Australians understand, been compromised as a result of 50,000 people choosing to take dangerous boat trips to Australia over the past six years.

The new bill also makes it very clear that an application for a protection visa by a member of the same family unit that already has an existing protection visa cannot be granted a protection visa just because he or she is a member of the same family. It clarifies at last that a person who marries a protection visa holder years after the time they were granted their visa will not be granted the same visa. Family migration will be the appropriate path in cases like that.

The government remains committed to prioritising individuals who are, on initial assessment, at the greatest risk. This bill will broaden the criteria for unauthorised maritime arrivals. As Immigration Minister Morrison has stated in this place before, this bill deserves the support of all parties. We need the tools to ensure public confidence in Australia's capacity to assess claims for asylum in the interests of this country and against the interests of those who act in bad faith. We are, as I have said, a nation of immigrants. Australians are fair-minded people. We have always welcomed those who wish to come to this country to help build this nation. We have always held out a generous and caring hand to those people in genuine need. Long may that be the case. But also fair-minded Australians feel like they have been taken advantage of at times when due process has been circumvented, documents in many cases being deliberately destroyed, and the whole notion of what it means to become Australian and have a fair go has been undermined. The measures in this bill go to the integrity of the system, and I encourage support for the bill from those opposite. It is important to recognise also that all of our obligations in respect of human rights under international law are also met with the amendments made by this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (18:35): I rise to speak in support of the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill. The overriding objective of the amendments in the bill is to enhance the integrity of Australia's immigration system. This is an incredibly important thing. This is a subject close to my heart. It is my firm and abiding belief that many of the inherent and distinctive features of our country have been forged on the enormous and longstanding success of our immigration system. This system has helped us to be great, has made us the lucky country that has made its own luck, and has meant that people from all over the world want to live here. Our immigration system has also supported our renowned fairness, openness and tolerance as a society, making us proud to be Australian. But, just as importantly, it has underpinned our extraordinary economic success. Since the end of the Second World War, our generous and open immigration system has welcomed huge waves of new Australians from all over the world. Moreover, Australia's immigrants have made lasting
contributions whilst rapidly becoming Australian in every meaningful sense. Our ability to do
this, so successfully, and for decades and decades on end, is unparalleled across the world.

Australians have not only welcomed migrants for a very long time; we have also, for a very
long time, collectively recognised that strong migration has been critical to our success as a
nation. I have no doubt that most, if not all, people in this place, across both sides of the
House, believe that strong and sustained migration remains critical to our future. It is critical
to our economic success and to our identity. Key to understanding the historical success
story—and I would argue essential to its continuing success—is a relentless focus on skilled
immigration. From the Snowy Scheme through to the present day, our guiding principle has
been a visa system which encourages and incentivises migrants who fill critical skill gaps. It
is not to say that we accept only those whose skills we need. Consistent with our international
and humanitarian obligations and also because we are a generous people, we will always
welcome many people who do not have skills, and we do this for many and varied reasons. So
we will always welcome into this country people who are fleeing persecution. That
commitment has been central to our ethos and it should never be in doubt.

But our ability to do our fair share amongst those nations in the world who can and who are
able to continue to give refuge to truly displaced people—people fleeing persecution from
circumstances that are unimaginable to most of us—rests absolutely on an ability to maintain
integrity in our immigration system. By 'integrity' I mean and the government means truth and
honesty. This aspiration is unremarkable. It means that those who qualify for a visa for
whatever reason—whether it is a visa which recognises a person's skills or a visa that
recognises protection under the refugee convention—should have such a visa. The quid quo
pro, of course, as in any system which has integrity, is that those who do not qualify for a visa
should not get one.

As I said, the overriding purpose of a great number of the amendments before us is to
maintain and, indeed, enhance the integrity of our immigration system. It is vital that genuine
claims are processed as quickly as possible so that those who are entitled to stay can stay and
get on with becoming great Australians; but it is equally vital that those claims which are not
genuine are rejected. Why is that? Because the historical integrity of our immigration system
has made us a truly great immigrant society. Our ability to do this—to welcome those who
have grounds to stay and, at the same time, to say 'no' to those who do not—is what sets us
apart from other immigrant nations. It is crucial to understand that there has always been an
underlying economic rationale for this approach to immigration, which stems back to
Federation and well before. Fortunately, we moved well beyond the White Australia policy,
and our current immigration policy is and should be blind to race and religion. But we should
never forget that there has been a longstanding consensus between Left and Right in
Australian politics that immigration needs to be controlled.

Indeed, Paul Kelly points out that this need to control immigration was central to what he
described as the 'Australian settlement'. He has pointed out that the union movement was
always a strong supporter of controlled immigration, particularly for unskilled immigrants,
driven by its desire to avoid creating a low wage underclass. The other side of the House
forgets this point at its peril. Martin Parkinson, the outgoing Treasury secretary, has recently
pointed out that Australia has been unusual in its ability to maintain relatively high wages for
the unskilled. I believe that we should be proud of that fact, but a shift to an uncontrolled
intake would endanger the egalitarian and tolerant ethos which is so central to being Australian.

Compare us with the United States and many European nations. Many years ago they either relinquished or lost control of their immigration systems. Indeed, in the US, this was institutionalised early in its history via slavery; but, more recently, it has struggled to control its southern border, with the result that uncontrolled Hispanic immigration is putting continual downward pressure on unskilled wages. Worse still, parts of America and Europe have seen swathes of illegal non-citizens living in ghettos, with no rights to citizenship or health and education services. This creates increasing disadvantage, puts massive downward pressure on unskilled wages and, therefore, increases inequality across all of society. That we have amongst the highest real wages in the world and, therefore, one of the highest living standards makes us absolutely distinctive. It makes us fairer. It makes us more unified, less class conscious, and it therefore makes us more tolerant. Controlled immigration is central to Australia as we know it today, and most of us envisage it in the future.

So that we can continue doing what we have always done—welcoming those who truly need our help and those whose help we really need—we must be vigilant about maintaining integrity in the system. Under the last government, we must understand that the integrity in the system was under serious strain. Our onshore processing was overwhelmed and buckling. In recent years—right through the last government's tenure—we have had and continue to have unprecedented numbers of people, tens of thousands of people, coming or trying to come to Australia. Some have come by boat but a great number have also come on airplanes, with passports and visas of many kinds, from all over the world. They are students, travellers and relatives of Australian residents. Many of these people wanted to come to Australia to stay. Applications became backlogged, and departmental staff and merits reviews under the relevant tribunals charged with oversight of these claims are still under enormous strain. The backlog has been substantially caused by the arrival of more than 800 boats and the more than 50,000 people who arrived on those boats.

The department has been required to spend millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars in simply administering these claims. The process has become unwieldy and slow because the system is overwhelmed. This policy disaster not only cost lives and about $12 billion; it also diverted attention from our regular migration programs and impacted on our humanitarian intake. In other words, the previous government's incompetence not only permitted the unauthorised arrival of more than 50,000 people, it threw our ordinary immigration processes into chaos. It threatened the longstanding integrity of the immigration program that we had become so proud of and that is so central to our history.

This government has put a stop to those outcomes. But the backlog that remains as a result of that incompetence is enormous and continues to cost millions. And while the boats are stopping, there are still many people who arrive on planes with passports and visas that appear to be legitimate, who then make protection and other visa claims. These amendments in large part apply to these applications. The amendments before the House will help to ensure that those who are entitled to a visa get one, and those who are not entitled do not.

Departmental officers and tribunal members currently experience great difficulty in making decisions when visa applicants lose or deliberately misplace identity documents, or simply refuse to provide them. Likewise, the tribunal encounters difficulties with the manufacture by
applicants of falsified documents to support protection visa claims. The review process often becomes laboured when claims differ markedly between the application stage and the review stage in the tribunal. These changes in claims can be about identity, background and even substantive claims concerning persecution. The amendments to the act provide the tribunal with the means to reject claims in these circumstances. In doing so the bill before us provides incentives to applicants to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth at all stages of the process. The amendments go a long way towards preventing exploitation by applicants who are not genuine. This not only enhances the integrity of the entire process, but also enhances the integrity of the outcome.

There are a number of other amendments that will enable decision makers in both the Refugee Review Tribunal and the Migration Review Tribunal to improve processing times and efficiency, such as being able to dismiss applications in respect of people who simply do not turn up at their allotted time for review proceedings, and also being able to deliver oral, rather than written reasons. Currently, tribunal proceedings can get delayed and bogged down by applicants whose objective is to do exactly that. These amendments will help the tribunal put a stop to this. It will help get the tribunals get through their horrendous backlogs. Of course, it will also accelerate long-awaited genuine cases and ensure they happen much faster. Importantly, the principal members of both tribunals support these amendments. Again, they are an example of the government's commitment to enhancing the integrity of our immigration system.

But, consistent with the government's commitment to fairness, the amendments contain protections for vulnerable applicants and for applicants who are children. With these new commitments, and with new provisions in place to encourage timely decision making, genuine applicants, vulnerable applicants and child applicants have absolutely nothing to fear. The applications of those who are exploiting the system can be more readily and appropriately dealt with. These are outcomes that we all want, and which we should have in a system with integrity.

One dividend of the success of our system is a generous humanitarian intake, which I emphasised in my first speech. Refugees have played an extraordinary role in the history of our country, and we should accept as many as we can without unwinding our immigration system and without threatening our extraordinary history of social cohesion. As we regain control of our immigration system after the disastrous experiences under the last government, this humanitarian dividend and intake should increase. We must get the timing right, but we will have the scope to do just that.

I am confident that as we regain control of our borders, we will be in a position to dramatically reduce, and ultimately even see the end of onshore detention. Again, the timing is critical, and we should never adopt any policy that risks returning to the disasters of the last government. But we also know that onshore detention is far less important in deterring people smugglers, if it is impossible to arrive illegally in the first place. This would be an added dividend from our successful policies.

The strength and integrity of our immigration system is a central feature of our history and prosperity. It is a feature that we cannot celebrate enough. It has been an economic success and a humanitarian success. Our great country has been a unique case study into social and
cultural cohesion across many cultures and races, and we should do everything we can to preserve that cohesion. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (18:49): I rise to speak against the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014 and the measures it contains. Put simply, it is unnecessary, it will do harm, it is against legal and moral principle, and I believe it contravenes our international humanitarian commitments.

The two key words used in justification for these amendments are 'streamline' and 'efficiency', but these are weasel words. The proposed changes are being made so that a person claiming humanitarian protection faces greater obstacles, is at risk of falling foul of additional procedural pitfalls, and has their opportunity to review any adverse decisions constrained. If 'streamline' is taken to mean the making of unfair decisions more smoothly and quickly, and 'efficiency' is taken to mean the further restriction on granting humanitarian protection, then this bill certainly furthers those ends. No case has been made for these changes. If in the government's view the tribunals are overturning too many refusals at first instance, perhaps the problem lies more with the quality of the initial decision-making than with the considered decisions of the independent expert tribunals.

It is a long established principle and practice in Australian administrative law that as a general rule nobody bears an onus of proof in administrative proceedings. The proposed changes in schedule 1, parts 1 and 2, place a refugee applicant in the position of having to prove their need for protection as an unsupported petitioner to an administrative system where the decision-maker is procedurally obliged to wait passively for proof that protection is required, and can refuse an application where an asylum seeker fails to provide documentary evidence of identity, nationality, or citizenship.

While an applicant clearly bears responsibility for explaining their claims, substantial fairness requires the onus to be shared with the decision-maker, who should play an active role in eliciting and clarifying the claims. This is because, for most asylum seekers, the refugee assessment process is foreign to them. It involves complex legal and procedural issues that can be difficult to understand and engage with and there may be further obstacles including language, torture or trauma, education, impairment, cultural background, remote detention or other special vulnerabilities. These factors may account for a person's failure to raise all claims and evidence to the department at first instance. There are well-established practices for the assessment of credibility which take into account the late disclosure of claims and individual vulnerabilities. So it is hard to see the need for this proposed law to direct tribunals to draw an adverse inference when they are already competent to make assessments of credibility and, indeed, do so every day.

Even more disturbing is the new provision allowing the failure of an applicant to provide evidence of identity as a ground for refusal of a protection application. Currently, the decision maker can draw an adverse inference from such failure to provide evidence. But now protection could be refused solely on the basis of a lack of identity documents without the central legal question of whether the person is at risk of persecution being addressed. If a person at such risk were returned to their place of persecution because of a lack of identity documents this would violate Australia's non-refoulement obligations.

I note that this provision runs contrary to the UN Refugee Convention which provides that states must not penalise asylum seekers for entering without valid documents and the
UNHCR guidelines which acknowledge that the refugee experience itself often militates against people obtaining identity or travel documents. Asylum seekers may be unable to obtain identity documents for understandable reasons, including well-founded fears of persecution for themselves or for family left behind. Again, it would seem to me that current provisions for the assessment of identity and credibility are adequate and no case has been made for introducing provisions that are fundamentally inconsistent with our protection obligations.

Humanitarian protection processes should not be based on a supplicant/gatekeeper relationship. Asylum seekers are not contestants for a prize. They are not adversaries in a conflict between competing interests. Asylum seekers are people who have lived and are living on the very edge of physical, mental and emotional survival. Their judgement and instincts are often shaped by their experience of horrors, by their proximity to further suffering and, paradoxically, by their proximity to the prospect of safety. It is absolutely wrong in those circumstances to move our system of humanitarian protection assessment further along the path of Kafkaesque impenetrability.

As with all the legislative amendments contained in this bill, one has to ask: where is the evidence that demonstrates a need for these changes? Where are the arguments that make a compelling case for the inadequacy of the existing arrangements and the clear benefits of the proposed departures from established practice and international norms? On this point, it is absolutely critical to see the proposed changes in the bill in the context of the government's decision earlier this year to axe funding for legal services that assist asylum seekers as they are confronted with this strange and difficult administrative test. In the first place, the government removed the support that previously existed to aid asylum seekers in navigating a complicated and unfamiliar process, and now the government seeks to make that process more onerous. It is a form of catch 22: a person whose experience of persecution and suffering renders them least able to make their case will be most disadvantaged by the changes contained in this bill.

The proposed changes to schedule 2 of the Migration Act are odious and unacceptable. What is the basis for introducing a new and significantly higher threshold when it comes to complementary protection? The established threshold test is whether there is a real chance that a person would be subject to persecution or life threatening harm. Why replace that perfectly sensible rationale with a form of probability test that is more generally found in the assessment of civil liability? If it were possible to determine that a person was only 49 per cent likely to be executed on their return to a place of danger, would any of us be happy for that to occur? The bottom line is that by making such a change we shift our protection assessment system to a point where returning a fellow human being to severe harm is more likely.

The proposed change in schedule 4 that allows the tribunal to give oral reasons, with the provision of reasons in writing made subject to a formal and time limited request, is yet another procedural step that potentially and unnecessarily condemns genuine asylum seekers to peril, especially in the absence of legal assistance. Asylum seekers may not understand the need to request written reasons within the limited period, and the consequence may be that their capacity to seek judicial review is severely limited. This provision strikes directly at the heart of our legal system in terms of its lack of transparency and accountability. If we take
'streamline' to mean that decision making becomes less transparent, less easily reviewed and more unfair in the name of procedural haste, then, of course, this amendment will achieve that end.

The provision in schedule 4 enabling the principal member to issue guidance directions to other members may impact upon the exercise of the independent merits review process by individual members of the tribunals. We need to ensure that consistency in decision making does not come at the expense of independence. The provision enabling tribunals to dismiss an application where an applicant fails to appear may have the effect of denying a fair hearing of an applicant's claims because of circumstances beyond their control, for instance, not having received notification, serious illness or impairment. The seven-day time limit to request reinstatement is too limited, given that many applicants may not understand the process.

I know I am not alone in occasionally wishing that we could have debates in this place where, in a relatively concentrated period of time, we could all speak and listen, hearing the arguments made for or against legislative change, with the opportunity and real prospect of changing other members' views and of having our views changed. This is certainly one of those times. In my view, this bill will seriously erode existing substantive and procedural safeguards and facilitate refusal of protection applications using technical procedural measures without due consideration of Australia's international protection obligations. There really is not any basis for these amendments. They can only be understood as moving towards a harsher approach, for its own sake, when it comes to providing humanitarian protection and a more discriminatory approach towards those who do not arrive by aeroplane. It would be better if this bill did not proceed any further, and I encourage all members to consider it carefully on that basis.

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (18:58): The Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014 is an important piece of legislation which will help to ensure our government continues to keep our borders secure. Under the very strong leadership of the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Scott Morrison, and through Operation Sovereign Borders, we are building integrity and efficiency into a process that was long neglected under the previous government. I am rising in support of this bill because I believe in what this government is doing to keep our borders secure. But I am also speaking in support of this bill because the people in my electorate of Robertson on the New South Wales Central Coast have got a particular concern about and awareness of the importance of strong borders and a secure Australia.

The people of Robertson want to have even more confidence in the Australian government's management of the processes that we have put in place in relation to people seeking asylum in Australia. That is what this bill does, by enhancing the integrity of the process so that Australians can be sure that those who are found to be refugees are, in fact, who they say they are. It aims to build on the measures we are already taking in assessing asylum seeker claims so that we can efficiently process illegal maritime arrivals.

People on the Central Coast tell me every day how much they appreciate our strong leadership and what we are doing to stop the boats. They know that when we came to office we inherited a border protection shambles from Labor. One of the reasons they voted for us at the last election was to stop the boats. These are people who are some of the most generous and welcoming in our nation. I attend many of the Gosford City Council's citizenship
ceremonies, and they are a fantastic opportunity to welcome proud new members of our Australian community. Along with the many families and friends who attend to support and welcome new citizens, I am always impressed by the support that our new Australians receive from residents in our community. It is particularly encouraging when I look around and see so many leaders of our voluntary clubs, sporting organisations, social groups and churches attending our citizenship ceremonies simply to express their support and welcome for our newest Australians or 'coasties', as they might be affectionately known on the Central Coast.

The people of Robertson support immigration, but they also believe it needs to be done the right way. For example, I was speaking with a young family in Kariong recently and they told me how glad they are that our government are not only stopping the boats but ensuring that we have a border and immigration protection system that assists the most vulnerable while ensuring proper safeguards for all Australians. I heard recently from a senior Australian in Umina who is also appreciative of the fact that we are stopping the boats because, with every boat that has been stopped, we have seen an end to the tragic loss of life at sea.

Just to give you an indication of the size of the challenge that we faced coming into government, in one month alone last year there were almost 50 people-smuggling ventures. There were 33 search-and-rescue operations—on average, more than one a day. Eighteen people lost their lives, including an infant. This was, indeed, a shameful period. The decision by Labor in government to take away the coalition's effective border protection policy—a policy that had worked well under the previous coalition government, led by Prime Minister John Howard—led to more than 50,000 illegal arrivals, including more than 8,000 children, on more than 800 boats. The number of children in held detention peaked at almost 2,000. Tragically, under the former Labor government, there were almost 1,200 deaths at sea.

This government pledged to stop the boats and fix this mess. And that is what we are doing, and this bill is part of the job that we are getting on with. To start with, the bill considers the responsibilities of asylum seekers. If they do not cooperate with the government to help establish their identity then they should not be given the benefit of a protection visa. The amendments outlined in the bill before the House will mean that any person who comes to this country seeking protection will have a responsibility to establish their own claims to be a refugee. They must also do this at the start of the process.

This bill will improve the integrity of the process by helping to prevent any potential exploitation of the merits review system. It will send a clear message that the ultimate responsibility lies with the asylum seeker to establish their claims for protection, and they must provide sufficient evidence to support these claims. This will apply to any asylum seeker making a claim for protection regardless of whether it is for an application for a protection visa or part of another administrative process. Under the legislation, it will not be the responsibility of the department or the Refugee Review Tribunal to make a case for protection on behalf of an asylum seeker. This practice is already seen in the United States, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

There are also elements to the bill that is before the House tonight about establishing an applicant's identity. I am advised that the department encounters many people who hold dual or multiple nationalities and who may even seek an advantage from not disclosing their genuine identity. Changes to section 91W of the Migration Act, and the introduction of a new section 91WA, introduce a power to refuse the granting of a protection visa unless the
applicant provides documentary evidence of their identity, nationality or citizenship when requested to do so or has taken reasonable steps to do so. This goes to the heart of why this bill should be supported. It should be supported because it adds integrity to this important process. People who destroy documents and those who do not engage in good faith about their identity will not be able to gain entry to our system.

Unfortunately, the previous Labor government's attempts at a solution led to a cost blow-out of more than $11.5 billion. Under this government, more than $2.5 billion has already been saved by stopping the boats, and we are closing the detention centres the former Labor government opened. This means that people are no longer waiting offshore to access our humanitarian program because their places have already been taken by those who have come illegally by boat.

This bill builds on the work that we are already doing by inserting section 91WB into the Migration Act. This proposed section puts beyond doubt that an applicant for a protection visa who is a member of the same family unit of an existing protection visa holder cannot be granted a protection visa just because they are a member of the same family. The change also discourages family members of protection visa holders from arriving in Australia illegally and expecting to be granted a protection visa simply on the basis of being a family member.

We are also looking to prevent exploitation of the review process. In the past, non-genuine asylum seekers have presented new claims or evidence later in the independent merits review process in an attempt to bolster their original unsuccessful claims. This would happen only after they learnt why they were not found to be refugees by the department. In the past, I am advised that this behaviour led to considerable delays while new claims were explored. To make this process clear, the bill includes an amendment to ensure that any claim that can be presented at the initial application stage is handed over at the very start of the process. Of course, there will always be a small number of vulnerable individuals, such as unaccompanied minors, who may not be able to clearly present their claims without assistance. I am assured that this government will continue to have arrangements in place for these cases and there will continue to be cooperation so that decision makers act in good faith.

This bill is also consistent with Australia's international obligations under the Refugee Convention, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention Against Torture. The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection has also outlined to the House other important elements of this bill, namely amendments to clarify the threshold for assessing Australia's non-refoulement obligations and amendments to streamline the operation of the current statutory bars placed on illegal maritime arrivals. I also welcome and support the amendments in Schedule 4 that aim to improve processing and administration of both the Refugee Review Tribunal and the Migration Review Tribunal.

This bill is important because the changes to legislation contained therein uphold the integrity our borders. We know that in the more than 12 months since the election there has been a dramatic transformation. Firstly, there have been no deaths at sea; the boats are stopping. There has been just one venture in the past nine months to make it to Australia. All of those passengers are now on Nauru. A total of 45 ventures have been stopped before they even set sail and 12 more have been turned back at sea, as we promised we would do consistent with our policies and our commitments that we made in the lead-up to the last election to the people of Australia and to the people of my electorate of Robertson on the
Central Coast. The number of children held in detention is also now down by more than 40 per cent. As the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection has said, ‘The people smugglers have crawled back under the rocks they came from.’

But the work is far from over and this government will not rest and let the people smugglers wrestle back any momentum. This is why this bill is crucial in adding integrity and efficiency to the system. This is what we committed to in opposition and we are doing what we said we would do. It is an honour to commend the bill to the House.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (19:10): One of the standout successes during the first 12 months of the coalition government has been the end to the drownings of asylum seekers in north Australian waters and the breakdown of the business model that propped up people smugglers during the previous Labor government's administration. It is impossible to believe that the previous government was able to get things so wrong, as they did when they undid the coalition's successful border protection policies. In doing so, they effectively put out the welcome mat to every opportunist with the boat in south-east Asia and reignited the people smuggling scourge that have been so effectively dealt with by former Prime Minister Howard in the previous years.

There are four main components to this legislation that I will deal with in order: scheduled 1 relates to protection visas; schedule 2 focuses on amendments relating to Australia's protection obligations, as they relate to international law; schedule 3 relates to unauthorised maritime arrivals; and schedule 4 deals with the Migration Review Tribunal and Refugee Review Tribunal. Schedule 1 is designed to improve the integrity and consistency of decision making in and preventing exploitation of the protection visa determination process, including in the merits review system of applicants who are not genuinely pursuing a protection claim. The amendment sends a clear message that asylum seekers have certain responsibilities, such as that they are responsible for establishing their identity, their nationality or their citizenship wherever it is possible to do so.

Similarly, asylum seekers are also responsible for making comprehensive claims for protection, supported by evidence, as soon as possible. The measures—when they are introduced—will apply to all asylum seekers, regardless of how they arrive in Australia. This amendments are necessary to ensure the continued public confidence in Australia's capacity to assess claims for asylum and to support public expectations that asylum claims are made in good faith. They are an effective response to the evolving challenges in the asylum seeker case load and in the recent judicial decisions and management of the backlog of illegal maritime arrivals.

Under the amendments, if an applicant has no reasonable explanation for disposing of their identity documents and provides no documentary evidence of identity or has not taken reasonable steps to provide such evidence, their application will be refused. However, an applicant will not be refused for a protection visa for disposing of their identity documents if they have a reasonable explanation for disposing of their documents. Of course, some stateless people may find themselves in that position and our amendments provide those seeking asylum under such circumstances a reasonable opportunity to explain the circumstances surrounding their situation. The government wants to reduce the length of time people remain in detention. If they are refused a protection visa, they may have their case referred to the minister for consideration to determine the most appropriate way to resolve
that person's immigration status. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis with reference to the particular country situation under question.

It is the view of this government that this measure is fair and reflects international standards. It has been long accepted that an asylum seeker is obliged to make and support their case for protection in good faith and to the best of their ability. This is reflected in the latest guidelines from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which state that applicants should 'tell the truth' and 'assist the examiner in full in establishing the facts of the case'.

As well as the Refugee Review Tribunal or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, judicial review of challenged decisions is also available. This amendment also clarifies that when a family migration outcome is sought the protection visa process is not the appropriate migration stream. Through this it prevents and discourages the use of the onshore component of Australia's humanitarian program as a means of family migration.

Section 2 of the bill amends the test to be satisfied when considering complementary protection claims as part of a protection visa application and inserts new section 6A into the act. Proposed section 6A makes it clear that the minister can only be satisfied that Australia has protection obligations in respect of the noncitizen if the minister considers that it is more likely than not that the noncitizen will suffer significant harm if removed from Australia to a receiving country. The bill also clarifies the definition of 'receiving country' to ensure that there is always a country of reference when considering Australia's protection obligations in respect of a person.

This amendment is being made in response to a full Federal Court decision which the government does not agree with. The court interpreted the complementary protection provisions in a way that was not intended when they were introduced into the Migration Act. The government is now seeking to restore the originally intended 'more likely than not' threshold. This threshold is the same threshold that was initially adopted by the government when the complementary protection legislation commenced in the Migration Act in March 2012.

A year later the full Federal Court found that the threshold for assessing complementary protection claims was whether there is a 'real chance' of harm occurring. This lower threshold applies in the refugee convention context. The High Court has interpreted 'real chance' under the refugee convention as being less than a 50 per cent chance of harm, including as low as a 10 per cent chance. The coalition government considers the 'real chance' threshold to be too low and not reflective of Australia's protection obligations. It is also considered to be a lower threshold than our international obligations.

When a person applies for a protection visa they are first assessed against the refugee convention applying the 'real chance' test. If they are found not to be a refugee, the person is only then considered for complementary protection. The complementary protection assessment will apply the 'more likely than not' threshold. The majority of people who engage Australia's protection obligations are those who are found to be refugees under the refugee convention—indeed, those who are found to engage Australia's protection obligations under the convention against torture and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.
The effect of restoring the risk threshold to 'more likely than not' will ensure that someone is not found to engage Australia's protection obligations and be granted a visa under the Migration Act in circumstances where they are not entitled to it. The risk threshold for assessing protection obligations under the CAT and the ICCPR will be restored to being 'more likely than not' a person would suffer significant harm. 'More likely than not' means that there would be a greater than 50 per cent chance that a person would suffer significant harm if returned home or to an alternative receiver country. This is an acceptable position open to Australia under international law.

Schedule 3 of the amendment bill relates to unauthorised maritime arrivals as defined in the Migration Act making a valid application for a visa. The intention of these amendments is to simplify the legal framework that applies to unauthorised maritime arrivals and transitory persons. Currently unauthorised maritime arrivals may be subjected to section 46A, section 91K or indeed both. These amendments ensure that an unauthorised maritime arrival who is an unlawful noncitizen, a bridging visa holder or the holder of a temporary visa prescribed for the purposes of the provision will be prevented from making a valid application for a visa unless the minister determines that it is in the public's interest to allow them to do so. They also provide that such a determination may have effect only for the period of time specified, have a different period of time specified for different classes of unauthorised maritime arrivals or be varied or revoked by the minister.

The amendments will create a bar on making a valid visa application at section 46A of the Act for unauthorised maritime arrivals who are in Australia and hold bridging visas or any other temporary visa prescribed in the regulations. And, finally, schedule 4 contains amendments relating to the Migration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal which were specifically requested by both tribunals and seek to improve their processing and administration. These include strengthening the powers of the principal member in relation to practice directions, the ability to issue guidance decisions and permitting a member to provide an oral statement of reasons in certain situations where there is an oral decision without having to provide a written statement of reasons. The amendment also includes a capacity for Migration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal to dismiss an application where an applicant fails to appear before a tribunal after being invited to do so, as well as a power to reinstate the application where the applicant applies for a reinstatement within a specified period of time.

The amendments are intended to reduce inconsistencies in decisions and to improve the processing and administrative efficiency of both tribunals. To conclude I want to acknowledge the efforts of this government and particularly the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the Member for Cook, on delivering the tools that have been so successful in stemming the tide of illegal boat arrivals to Australia. It is the coalition government that has shown it is prepared to make the tough decisions to restore sovereignty to Australia’s borders and to save the lives of the innocent people who fell for the lure of people smugglers and false promises that they would be able to be settled in Australia.

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (19:24): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on these important amendments to the broader suite of migration legislation that we have in this parliament. It is important to reflect a bit at the outset on why immigration is so important and fundamental to our society. More than half of my electorate of Banks has at least one parent
born overseas. People in Banks come from all parts of the world. Banks has the largest number of people of Chinese background of any electorate in Australia, as well as people from the Middle East, Europe and many other places. The diversity is one of the things that makes our community so great and one of the things that makes Australia such a great place. Your country of origin or your religion does not matter; the only things that really matter in this country is that you participate in our society, that you play by the rules and that you make the most of your citizenship. That is why our immigration program has been so successful.

Immigration, I think, comes down to two sets of policy priorities. One is national self-interest; by driving a strong immigration policy we help to improve our economy. There are many areas of the economy where immigration has helped to build industries—as far back as the Snowy Mountains scheme and IT is a more recent and prime example. The other one is the humanitarian aspect. As a wealthy country we do have an obligation and a responsibility to help people from some of the most devastated places in the world. We have a strong tradition of doing just that. In order to provide compassionate relief for people who are fleeing some of the worst places on earth you need to have control over the system, because at the point where you throw your hands in the air and say, 'This is all too difficult to control,' you lose the integrity of the system, you lose public support for the system and you lose the capacity to effectively manage your own borders. That is something that this government will never allow.

We have been in office for just on one year, and I thought it would be useful to reflect on some of the achievements in that time—and they have been substantial. As I said before, to have confidence in the system we need to have confidence in the integrity of our borders. We did see under the previous government extraordinary mismanagement—one of the greatest examples of the mismanagement of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government was the failure on our borders. In the 12 months prior to the last election, we had 400 boats arrive on our shores. Let's not pretend for one minute that there is any humanitarian benefit from such a system, because we know that under such a system people place their lives in peril at the hands of unscrupulous people smugglers. We know that the vast majority of those journeys ended in heartbreak and despair. We also know that people who were in camps and other locations overseas waiting for a refugee place were directly disadvantaged by those boat arrivals. I will come to the Special Humanitarian Program in a minute.

Since we have been in office and since the start of Operation Sovereign Borders, only one boat has reached Australian shores—400 in the last 12 months of the Labor government, and one since December last year. That is a very substantial difference, and it is something that this government is justifiably proud of.

There is an important economic benefit too: when you have control over your borders, your requirement to detain people in detention is obviously reduced. As a consequence, we have been able to close down four immigration detention centres: Scherger in Queensland, Port Augusta in South Australia, Leonora in Western Australia, and, of course, Pontville in Tasmania. The benefit to doing that is close to $100 million per year. It is about $90 million—that is the economic benefit of closing down those detention centres. Nobody wants detention centres in operation. We all want a situation where people are not arriving illegally, where they are having their applications assessed on their merits, and where, consequently,
detention centres become less and less relevant. We have already seen that benefit with four of them closed down; a benefit of about $90 million a year.

The other point is the very important humanitarian dividend that we have seen from the activities of the government in the past 12 months. Of course, Mr Deputy Speaker, you are familiar with the special humanitarian category of visa. This is for people who do not quite comply with the strict definition of a refugee under the refugee convention, but nonetheless are often in desperate circumstances—often waiting in refugee camps, in the Middle East and other places. Perhaps for technical reasons, they do not comply with the rules for being a refugee but they are nonetheless really in a very bad way. Under the previous government, because the refugee intake was so overwhelmed by illegal boat arrivals, the number of people who came in on special humanitarian visas had dropped to a trickle—less than 500 a year. These are people who are following the correct process and waiting, often in a refugee camp, in an appalling situation but who for some reason do not quite comply with the definition of a refugee. Those people were very badly done by under the Labor government—that group of admissions had slowed to a trickle because the places were taken by illegal boat arrivals. We have changed that now, and it is back up to 4,000 per year under the special humanitarian process. That is something which is a great humanitarian benefit.

It is important to reflect on what the opposition thought about the government's border protection policies when those policies were implemented. If we cast our minds back about 10 months ago, to about November—you will recall at the time, Mr Deputy Speaker, there was a lot of discussion about whether the government's border security policies could work; whether it was possible to stop the flow of unlawful boat arrivals; and whether it was possible—logistically, technically and legally—to turn boats around, as we had said we would do. If we go back to 9 November last year, the shadow immigration minister said: 'We have had Indonesia from day one saying they won't accept tow-backs...it was inevitably going to fail'. And that is what we saw yesterday. That was in relation to turning boats back around. And on the same day, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'There is no doubt in my mind that the coalition's boat-person policy is just absolutely not working.' That was on 9 November 2013. I suspect he would revise those comments, were he to make them today. But they do demonstrate why leadership is so important in this area—because the government did take some very difficult decisions, but they have been very successful, and they have had a humanitarian benefit.

We know the record—or lack thereof—of the opposition in this space: an $11 billion blow-out in border security costs; 8,000 unlawful arrivals in the 2011-12 financial year, at a cost of almost $180,000 each—so that is a huge number of people coming in because of the porous border security policy that we had in place; and there was inefficient management once they arrived. The cost to taxpayers was $180,000 each—just completely unacceptable. We should never, ever forget—and this is a mark of shame on the previous government—that they then spent $2 million advertising their border security policies, supposedly to people smugglers, including in our regional newspapers and radio stations around the country—where, I suspect, not many people smugglers were active. That is a huge contrast: clear failure by the previous government, and clear success from this one.

We are going to add to that success with some important changes which are proposed in the bill before us this evening, the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures)
Bill 2014. The first change is in relation to protection visas. This is to make clear a fundamental principle and a fundamental point of law—that is, that in applying for protection the onus is on the applicant to make their case. So the applicant for asylum needs to demonstrate, to the best of their ability, why they comply with the relevant criteria of the visa that they are seeking to be granted, and then advocate the reason why they believe they should be allowed to receive that visa. And the bill makes clear that it is not the role of the government or the departmental decision maker to advocate on behalf on the applicant; because there is, of course, a conflict involved in being both the decider of the outcome and also the person who is advocating on behalf of the applicant. These proposed changes make it very clear that it is the responsibility of the applicant to put forward their case. Of course, provisions are made for people who are unable to advocate on their own behalf, such as children and people with other significant disadvantages. But the general principle is that if you are seeking asylum, it is incumbent upon you to advocate on your own behalf. That is entirely as it should be.

The other point about the non-refoulement obligation is important too. You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, that a moment ago I was speaking about the special humanitarian visa category. These are, as I said, people who do not comply with the formal definition under international law of a refugee, but nonetheless are in desperate circumstances. This group was heavily disadvantaged under Labor, because there were no spots left for them because of unlawful boat arrivals. But we have now got that group back up to about 4,000 a year, which is a significant intake.

This bill provides a clarification which says that the task for the minister and for the department to consider, in assessing one of these applications, is whether it is more likely than not that, should that person be returned to their home country, they would suffer serious difficulties and significant harm. That was the test under the 2012 legislation that was introduced and it is the same test that applies in the United States, Canada and various other places.

The Federal Court last year in the SZQRB case changed the standard to what they described as a 'real chance' of significant harm, and that could be as little as a 10 per cent chance. So you can imagine from an assessment perspective, if the requirement is that there is only a 10 per cent chance of significant harm occurring, that makes it very difficult to differentiate between who should be granted a special humanitarian visa and who should not. By going back to the original intention, which is more likely than not—so effectively 50 per cent plus one—we reinstate that integrity into the system and we say if it is more likely than not that you will suffer significant harm then you comply under these provisions.

Other important changes relate to some technical matters about unauthorised arrivals applying for visas. There were some technical distinctions where an applicant who was on a bridging visa would in some circumstances have to apply under a different regime than someone who was also here unlawfully but was not on a bridging visa. That did not add any value to the legislation; it just created confusion. The change here means that in the vast majority of cases unlawful maritime arrivals, when they go through that visa application process, will follow the same process, the same piece of legislation, the same documents and so on.
Finally, there are some important administrative changes to the MRT and the RRT processes that were requested by the tribunals themselves. They go to things such as the ability to give an oral statement rather than it being required to be given in writing, to be able to dismiss an applicant's matter if that applicant fails to show up when they have been given full warning that the matter is to be heard and various administrative provisions which are important.

Building on an exceptional track record of success, these changes will take our immigration system forward further. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (19:39): I rise to speak on the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. What self-congratulatory twaddle from those opposite! What self-serving hypocrisy from those who seek to rewrite history, to ensure that history records events in their disputed way and to ensure that they do not accept any responsibility for their actions in the last term of parliament.

The member for Banks spoke about a mark of shame. Through you, Chair, let me tell the member for Banks about a mark of shame: when your side refused to back our attempts to get an agreement with Malaysia, the then leader of the opposition, now Prime Minister, maligned the Malaysia government and then apologised later—as is his wont. His wont is to go out, make his political line—it does not matter who he offends—and seek forgiveness later. He maligned the entire Malaysian government and the Malaysian people over the arrangements over there and, as a result, he ensured that we were unable to get an agreement in place that would have helped to break down the way in which people smugglers were plying their trade. What happened as a result when we did not get the Malaysia agreement up? Six hundred and eighty-nine people lost their lives. If you want to talk about a mark of shame, when will they step up and apologise for the fact that they were culpable in voting down a system that would have ensured that we would have less people arriving here?

The hypocrisy is astounding. When we put the Malaysia agreement up, the then opposition, the coalition, claimed that it was not right to put in an agreement in place with a country that was not a signatory to the UN convention dealing with refugees. So we then put an agreement in place with Papua New Guinea that has allowed, singularly, the greatest reduction in the number of boat arrivals. But when we first brought down the details of an agreement in July 2013, it was resisted by those opposite. In fact, the then opposition foreign affairs spokesperson suggested that we were completely outsourcing our decision-making processes and our foreign aid to Papua New Guinea only to have the then leader of Papua New Guinea, Peter O'Neill, forcefully repudiate that claim. Those opposite worked so hard to prevent that agreement from getting in place. Now that is in place, they want to claim all the political kudos for something that has been effective—and demonstrably effective—in slowing those arrivals and in ensuring that people smugglers do not have the ability to lure people to take the dangerous two-day trip from Indonesia to Australia.

Speaker after speaker opposite have tried to claim that the government have been able to stop the boats as a result of their policies. What stopped the boats, principally, has been the PNG agreement. It has not been the way in which those opposite have been able to hold press conferences. Instead of being up-front and transparent about what is going on, they hide all the evidence about what has happened.

Mr Tudge interjecting—
Mr HUSIC: The member opposite, the parliamentary secretary, asks whether we have apologised. Go to the records. You voted in support of those changes. Why do you not ever get up and say, 'We did vote for those changes in 2008-09 when they were put through'? The member for Aston wants to try and rewrite history yet again and try and airbrush their voting record. Sorry, champion, you cannot do that, because the record is clear: you voted for the dismantling of those laws as well.

In voting down the Malaysia agreement, you also did a deal with the Greens. You have this love-hate relationship with the Greens: one minute you love them, one minute you hate them. You did a deal with the Greens and, as part of that deal to stop the Malaysian agreement from going ahead, you agreed that you would lift the humanitarian intake from 13,000 to 20,000. That is what you agreed. You got your vote, and you got your way. As a result of us not getting the Malaysia agreement in place, 689 people lost their lives at sea as a result of what was going on.

Having been to Christmas Island myself and having spoken in this chamber a number of times about the way in which that episode moved my entire approach and view of the way we needed to manage this issue, and having said that we needed to do what we did to ensure that people did not make that trip, we then had the situation where the lure of going from a humanitarian intake of 13,000 to 20,000 was put in place as a deal. What was the first thing the government did when they got into office? They reneged on the deal. Along with the Greens, they reneged on the deal to lift the humanitarian intake. They talk now about how they are prioritising and looking after people that are waiting for humanitarian entry. Why didn't they stick to the deal to grant more people access and why won't they, to this day, support the opposition's calls to lift the number of people allowed in from 13,000 to 20,000? They simply will not.

As is always the case with those opposite, particularly through the tawdry display we saw in the last term of this parliament, they put their political interests ahead of the national interest. They put their own political gain ahead of us being able to have a system in place that would stop this. From their perspective, they did not want to see a slowdown at all. They did not want to see us stop the boats—their mantra when they were in office. They wanted to be able to do whatever they could to thwart our ability to stop this. It is a shameful period. I am not going to have members opposite get up and say it is a mark of shame against us. What is a mark of shame is the complete frustration that they were happy to see happen as a result of blocking arrangements that we put in place. It is worthwhile noting the chatter that was picked up through the intelligence community—people had basically turned up to people smugglers wanting their money back when they heard that the Malaysia agreement was being proposed. Those opposite saw the numbers drop and knew that this was going to have an impact. The coalition knew that the Malaysia agreement was going to have an impact and that is why they worked so hard to stop it.

Mr Tudge interjecting—

Mr HUSIC: I come back to the point that you supported it as well, because, member for Aston, you picked up the community view about that, but you try to airbrush it as so many things—you try to airbrush that out.

The key thing that needs to be remembered is that we were prepared to take these steps in the national interest. They were important. When the High Court made its decision, we
attempted to make changes, which then saw the coalition do everything they could to frustrate our ability to do so. Unlike when we were in opposition, under the Howard government, when we worked with those opposite on elements of this, they refused to extend the same commitment to work with us.

What do we have from those opposite? What we have is a refusal to be up-front with the Australian people about what is going on. We have to wait for High Court decisions, as we did with the 158 Sri Lankan nationals sitting on a vessel in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Those opposite were refusing to provide those details, saying that it was an on-water operation and that they did not regard it as being in the domain of the Australian people to know what was going on. They refused to provide facts about what was going on. That is despite the fact that, in every question time, the immigration minister was at the dispatch box claiming credit for what had gone on, when in fact the foundation stone of that result was the Papua New Guinea agreement. The immigration minister was suddenly MIA when it came to explaining why we had 158 nationals sitting out in the Indian Ocean. There was no response, no explanation as to what was going on, what was happening with these people. They were sitting there for over four weeks. I think it was six or seven weeks before they were transferred. The government was attempting to get agreements with India and other nations to accept the people on that vessel. It was completely hidden from view. There was no transparency, no openness, no fact, no detail. If there is an opportunity to get to the dispatch box and claim credit for something or to try to extract some sort of political gain, they are there; but if it is about being up-front with people then they are completely invisible and refuse to answer questions. It is simply not good enough.

Rightfully, there are questions to be asked and answered about the way in which the management of these facilities overseas is being conducted, to ensure that there are proper processes in terms of investigation, and again we do not see that happen at all. There is certainly lightning-fast movement to try to extract some sort of political gain, but there is not an equivalent response in accepting responsibility for the decisions that are made. From our perspective, if the nation's parliament is to work together truly on these issues, it should work on them; it should prioritise the protection of people's lives, it should prioritise the orderly movement of people and it should prioritise the integrity of the system. But it should certainly not abrogate its responsibilities in the quest for political gain on this issue. When we were trying to deal with these very difficult issues, to have those opposite run the way that they did was a complete mark of shame on them and a complete failure on their part to prioritise what needed to be done at that point in time.

I know that I speak on behalf of the member for Wakefield and certainly the member for Moreton—who, along with me, were involved in investigating the tragedy that occurred on Christmas Island in 2010—in saying that we changed our views on these matters. We thought we needed to work together to stop that, but clearly those opposite were not interested. Now we have this procession of self-congratulation, with a failure to accept responsibility for what they have done and a failure to acknowledge that principally the big moves in being able to stop and to stem that tide have come from the Papua New Guinea agreement and the resettlement agreements that we have over there, and that should be acknowledged. As much as some of the decisions that we took in government may have caused grief, and certainly were not necessarily met with widespread agreement by Labor supporters—I understand why.
people would feel like that—from my perspective I have always thought the priority should have been the maintenance of life, the protection of life, and to ensure that people did not drown, but that we also found a way to liberate people from camps where they had been stuck for years. People have reflected on constituents living in their electorates who have gone to citizenship ceremonies and have made very productive and positive contributions to Australian society.

From my own point of view, I have spoken with people who had been stuck in camps where they had seen 10 years of their lives pass completely by and had no prospect of being picked up, liberated and given a second chance. I have seen them in my area, where some of their proudest moments as new communities have been to congratulate others—for example, the first amongst them to get driver's licences, the first amongst them to get mortgages or the first amongst them to see their children accepted into schools and into higher education. These are moments of great pride for them, and we have been able to see them come here and be saved from the despair of those camps. That is what we needed to prioritise, and certainly it should be the way in which we work. I would hope, too, that we would be able to find, for instance, an ability to free people who are stuck in Lebanon at the moment and who have no prospect of returning to Syria. And why would you force them back to that quagmire and that terrible situation? We should be able to find a greater place for them in our humanitarian intake. And as the opposition leader has rightly said, and I think a lot of us support it, we should lift the intake so that we can extend to them the ability to get out of there and have a positive start in our country.

There are ways we can move forward on this, ways we should move forward on this. But, again, it also requires those opposite to accept responsibility for what they had done, for their part in thwarting our ability to improve the situation, to stop people losing their lives at sea. We should not have seen that happen, and they should accept their part in it.

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (19:54): I am very pleased to be speaking in favour of the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014 today. It is a bill that is part and parcel of the coalition's plan to secure our borders and to protect the integrity of our special humanitarian program. It was a core commitment of the coalition team to restore certainty, confidence and security to our migration and border protection arrangements. Australians want to know that the government is handling the case load of asylum seekers with integrity and efficiency. They want assurance that it is not possible to manipulate the system or to use it for purposes other than generally presenting a claim for protection. The coalition government is the only government that can provide the Australian people with this assurance. In my conversations with them, the people of my electorate have communicated to me that the foundational principles of our immigration system should be fairness and robustness. The people of Barton want to see strong borders and strong principles of fairness and generosity. Australians do not want to see the immigration system overrun with insincere applications for refuge or unpredictable and regular breaches of our borders. When we work to maintain the integrity of the visa system as a whole, Australians can be more confident in our ability to manage the complex case load and evolving difficulties associated with identity and verifiability, and vulnerable people all across the world can have more confidence in our ability as a nation to reserve resettlement for those most in need.
Australia's humanitarian program is an integral part of our nation's identity as a culture of welcoming and compassionate people. One example of this program well and truly at work is the 1,000 places that our immigration minister has advised were provided last year to those affected by the Syrian conflict. The decision of the government to offer refuge to 4,000 members of the Christian and Yazidi minorities fleeing persecution in Syria and Iraq is a resounding indicator that this government is serious about extending refuge to those desperately in need. It is the deadly turmoil unfolding in places like Iraq and Syria that really brings home my understanding of the special humanitarian program's purpose. These 4,000 places form a resounding and fitting example of what is possible when you contain fraud, inefficiency and irregular entry to Australia so that places may be freed up for those offshore awaiting our help. It renews the government's resolve to provide refuge to those who genuinely need it. And it is through protection and special humanitarian programs against fraud and those operating in bad faith that it can be preserved for those who both warrant our protection and desperately need it.

The measures of this bill aim to address complex challenges that have arisen within the humanitarian program so that we can make integrity, efficiency and the establishment of identity a priority. Maintaining stringency around proof of identity in the context of border security for those coming into and out of Australia is more important than ever given this government's determination to secure Australia against threats to the integrity of our immigration system and our national security as a whole. If individuals are unwilling to take reasonable steps to establish their identity or are clearly acting in bad faith, Australians do not want to see those individuals rewarded with the benefits of a protection visa. The government's humanitarian program exists for the purposes of protecting the genuinely vulnerable from serious persecution, not for the purposes of extending an individual's stay in Australia or protecting individuals with no established identity whose grounds for protection are insubstantial. There is no good reason that a genuinely vulnerable individual fleeing persecution and conflict would engage in fraudulent or seriously dishonest conduct in the process of making a claim to Australia's protection. The open-hearted nature of our community to those who are fleeing persecution must not be taken advantage of by those who seek to rort the system. Strengthening the process to establish an applicant's identity is a central element of this bill. Indeed, openness and honesty in establishing one's identity is a core indicator of good faith. The bill will ensure that dishonest or fraudulent conduct in relation to the presentation of identifying documents is taken into account in decisions to grant protection visas and that those applicants who have provided the department or the tribunal with bogus documents will have their claims dismissed.

The bottom line is that Australians do not want to see individuals who are operating in bad faith or who are unwilling to provide evidence of their identity taking advantage of our humanitarian programs. Australians expect the government to take the necessary steps to weed out practices of document disposal, fraud and vexatious claims to preserve the integrity of this important humanitarian program. This government knows that applicants for an Australian visa are responsible for bringing their own claims and for providing the material necessary to substantiate them. The ultimate responsibility for providing evidence of claims to protection status is theirs. The decision making process that the department and the tribunal undertake should not be conflated with a process of assistance or substantiation on the part of government staff. As such, schedule 1 of this bill reasserts the role of the Refugee Review
Tribunal as involving the consideration claims which are brought before it. It is clearly not the role of the tribunal to produce or defend those claims. The same applies to staff of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

This government is firm in its resolve to prevent the misuse of our system by those who do not in their own minds believe they are a person in respect of whom Australia has protection obligations—those individuals who believe that lodging a claim for protection and the subsequent likely rejections and reviews through the Refugee Review Tribunal will give them further time in Australia. The serious and costly consideration of a claim to Australia's protection must not be treated as an avenue to further time spent visiting, working or living in Australia by those who know they are not fleeing dangers offshore. The backlog of illegal maritime arrivals is a complex factor which can often have ramifications for the entire caseload of asylum seekers worldwide, including those registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The way in which asylum seekers arrive in Australia, and the manner in which they conduct themselves with respect to their application process, should never impede the department's ability to process the claims of asylum seekers fleeing a site of conflict offshore, waiting for their claims to be considered through regular channels of migration. Marriage and family relationships do not constitute an entitlement to a protection visa; regular channels of family migration must be pursued in the case of a spouse or relative of a person in respect of whom Australia has protection obligations.

Schedule 2 clarifies Australia's obligations in regard to nonrefoulement. The nonrefoulement threshold of 'more likely than not' is made clear. It is a realistic and reasonable measure that recognises the gravity and weight with which the government considers an official refugee status. Put simply, refugees are those fleeing seriously dangerous and traumatic situations. This threshold is well and truly open to Australia as an option and within international requirements. It is the individuals, families, and children fleeing from these kinds of situations that our humanitarian visa programs should protect.

One measure in schedule 4 of this bill which will particularly improve the efficiency of our processing system from a practical perspective is the ability for principal decision makers on the Refugee Review Tribunal to issue guidance decisions. This measure, coupled with the ability for the tribunal to make oral rather than written decisions, will resolve several challenges to the efficient and simple operation of our humanitarian visa process. The bill also streamlines the role of the Refugee Review Tribunal, rendering its operations more efficient and taking the applicant's attendance at the tribunal seriously. These amendments also simplify the standard of evidence associated with the initial application and review tribunal respectively. As an integrity measure, an applicant must justify why a serious claim is raised at the tribunal but not at the initial application stage, and explain why evidence is presented at the review stage but not within the initial application. This is a simple but effective way to ensure that applicants act with integrity and good faith at all times so that our humanitarian programs are dedicated to the protection of those in respect of whom we have international obligations.

Ultimately, this bill tightens up the integrity and efficiency of the humanitarian visa system so that as a nation we can render efficient assistance to those individuals operating in good faith who are most in need of our protection.
In cooperation with the stellar work of our border protection officers, the good judgement of the Minister for Immigration and the processes already in place with the department of immigration and the Refugee Review Tribunal, this government will ensure that our system is the best it can be and is working towards the protection of the most vulnerable individuals all around the world. As the great former Prime Minister John Howard so aptly expressed it, 'We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come.' These measures will keep Australia's immigration system accountable and consistent, providing us with true control over the processing of claims and securing our ability to offer resettlement to those truly in need. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (20:04): I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill. I understand the opposition may have a bit more to say at a later stage of these proceedings, but it is important to simply sum up, again, the purposes of the bill. The bill amends the Migration Act to implement a range of measures which will enhance the integrity and efficiency of Australia's protection status determination process. These measures will provide the government with the necessary tools to assess asylum seekers irrespective of their mode of arrival in Australia through an effective and coherent protection processing system. The bill provides legislative support for decision makers who assess the claims of people seeking protection in this country. The measures in this bill clarify lines of responsibility—it is up to the person seeking protection in Australia to establish their identity and their claims to protection in good faith and as soon as possible. It is not the decision maker's responsibility to make out a claim for protection.

The measures before the House go to improving the quality of protection visa applications and the decision making process in the interests of integrity and efficiency. The first schedule of the bill goes directly to establishing a timely, efficient and higher quality protection claim processing system. The bill will put beyond doubt that it is the asylum seeker's responsibility to establish their claim for protection and to provide sufficient evidence to support those claims. It also makes clear that asylum seekers must present their claims and supporting evidence at the earliest opportunity. Where an asylum seeker raises claims or evidence at the Refugee Review Tribunal for the first time they must have a reasonable explanation for not having raised those claims or evidence before a primary decision was made. Where there is no reasonable explanation, the RRT will have the power to draw an adverse inference regarding the credibility of those new claims and evidence.

Establishing identity is a pivotal factor in maintaining the overall integrity of the protection visa system. Identity can have a direct bearing on whether an asylum seeker engages Australia's protection obligations. When assessing an asylum seeker's claim for protection the decision maker needs to be confident that the asylum seeker is who they say they are. If asylum seekers do not cooperate with the government to establish their identity, they should not be given the benefit of a protection visa.

In order to give effect to this policy, amendments to the Migration Act will provide decision makers with the power to refuse a protection visa on three separate grounds: refusing or failing to comply with a request to provide documentary evidence of identity, nationality or citizenship; destroying or discarding such evidence or causing that to occur; or providing a bogus document to establish identity. However, a decision maker may decide not to refuse a
protection visa on one of those three grounds if they are satisfied that the applicant has a reasonable explanation for their actions, and that can occur, and either provides documentary evidence of their identity, nationality or citizenship or has taken reasonable steps to do so.

The bill will also put beyond doubt that an applicant for a protection visa who is a member of the same family unit of an existing protection visa holder cannot be granted a protection visa years later simply on the basis of being a member of the same family. They must use established migration pathways for family reunion.

The second schedule of the bill makes it clear that the higher threshold is required to engage Australia’s non-refoulement obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The government’s position is that the threshold for assessing Australia’s non-refoulement obligations is ‘more likely than not’. This means a greater than 50 per cent chance that a person would suffer significant harm in the country they are returned to. This threshold is an acceptable position open to Australia under international law and will be applied to assessments of complementary protection claims. I note that this is not the threshold that is being provided to refugee claims under the refugee convention, which seems to have been a suggestion in some of the debate both in this place and outside this place. I also note that the ‘more likely than not’ test was the exact same test that was used by the former government and now opposition when they were assessing these very claims. What this bill is legislating is the practice of the previous government, what they actually did and what their policy actually was.

The third schedule of the bill will streamline the operation of the current statutory bars placed on illegal maritime arrivals that prevent them from making a valid visa application. The statutory bar under section 46A of the Migration Act will now apply to illegal maritime arrivals, regardless of whether they are unlawful, on bridging visas or other proscribed temporary visas. Amendments to section 46B of the Migration Act will also be made to ensure that transitory persons are treated consistently with illegal maritime arrivals. These are important streamlining and efficiency measures.

The fourth schedule of the bill will improve the processing administration of the RAT and the Migration Review Tribunal. The principal member will be able to issue practice directions about review procedures and processing practices as well as guidance decisions to tribunal members to reduce inconsistencies when similar issues are raised across decisions. The tribunals will also be given powers to make an oral rather than a written statement where there is an oral decision. They will be able to dismiss review applications when an applicant fails to appear at a scheduled hearing before the tribunal and to reinstate the application where it is appropriate to do so.

This government is committed to strengthening the integrity and efficiency of Australia’s protected status determination process. The bill before the House today will provide the necessary tools to deliver on this commitment. The bill deserves the support of all parties to ensure continued public confidence in Australia’s protection processing system. I commend the bill to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell):** The question is that the bill be read a second time.
The House divided. [20:14]
The Deputy Speaker—Mr Mitchell

Ayes ...................... 81
Noes ...................... 45
Majority ................. 36

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gillespie, DA
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G

CHAMBER
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Mr MARLES (Corio) (20:22): by leave—I move:

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (table items 5 to 8), omit the table items.
(2) Schedule 2, page 10 (line 1) to page 15 (line 9), omit the Schedule.
(3) Schedule 4, item 17, page 27 (line 10) to page 29 (line 14), omit the item.
(4) Schedule 4, item 33, page 37 (line 25), omit ",, 368(2) or 368D(1)"

As foreshadowed in my speech in relation to this bill, Labor now seeks to amend the bill to remove schedule 2 and item 17 of schedule 4. Schedule 2 of this bill makes significant changes to the way Australia will determine if it has protection obligations in relation to certain non-citizens. Specifically, the bill inserts a new section 6A, which provides that a non-citizen is not entitled to complementary protection unless that person can prove that 'it is more likely than not that the non-citizen will suffer significant harm if the non-citizen is removed from Australia'.

Currently, the 'real chance' test means that a person must not be returned to a situation where there is a real chance they would face significant harm. This means a chance that is not remote or insubstantial but that may be below a 50 per cent threshold. Some international jurists have suggested as little as a 10 per cent threshold may invoke that test. The effect of the proposed changes is that the threshold would be increased, meaning that this could potentially put vulnerable people seeking Australia's protection at risk of persecution, death or serious harm if returned to their home country.
While Labor notes that those requiring complementary protection is only a small cohort of those who apply for refugee status but are refused, they are nonetheless an important cohort. When Labor introduced the Migration Amendment (Complementary Protection) Act 2011 it was intended to assess and provide protection to those who do not satisfy the definition of a refugee as based on the Refugee Convention but are nonetheless in need of protection on the basis that they face serious violations of their human rights if they return to their country of origin. The cases often cited as not fitting within the definition of the Refugee Convention include those which invoke other international instruments such as the Convention against Torture, honour killings or women returning who face the fear of female genital mutilation. In those circumstances, we believe that an increase in the threshold invoking this legislation is an inappropriate step for this country to take. The changes proposed by schedule 2 of the current bill are contrary, therefore, to the complementary protection framework that Labor introduced.

It is also important to note the government's form on the issue of complementary protection. It was only last year that the government sought to remove Labor's changes to complementary protection by introducing the Migration Amendment (Regaining Control Over Australia's Protection Obligations) Bill 2013. This bill sought to unwind Labor's statutory regime for complementary protection. It did not pass the parliament, and what we have now is another attempt by the government to make it more difficult for those who are seeking and are in need of protection to obtain it. On that basis we seek to amend the bill to remove schedule 2.

We also seek to amend the bill to remove item 17 of schedule 4. Currently, where the Refugee Review Tribunal gives an oral statement of reasons, they must also provide a written statement to an applicant. However, the proposed changes in this bill will only require a written statement to be provided where there is a request made by the applicant. This is a clear watering down of the bill. It is of particular concern, given the government's recent decision to axe the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme. This could result in applicants not knowing or understanding what their rights are during a merits review, not having the comprehension to understand the reasons for a tribunal decision given orally, not being able to brief representation appropriately in the context of appeal and not being aware of the requirement to make a request. This change will severely disadvantage those who are unrepresented, who are unfamiliar with the system and who are not proficient in English. Labor is therefore concerned that this change will result in a denial of procedural fairness to those engaged with the system that is meant to protect them. For this reason Labor is also seeking to have this item removed in its entirety from the bill.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (20:27): Once again the Labor Party is opposing the government on border protection. There is no great surprise about that. The opposition has always opposed this government when it comes to border protection. They have always opposed the Liberal Party and National Party when it comes to having successful border protection policies. So it is no shock that the deputy shadow minister for immigration—with the real shadow minister for immigration being Senator Hanson-Young—is going to come in here and yet again oppose another set of legislation from the government that will ensure that we have a more effective border protection regime and system for processing claims in this country. They opposed turnback.
They opposed temporary protection visas. They had to be dragged kicking and screaming when it came to offshore processing. If they were ever given the opportunity to occupy the government benches again, they would roll it all back again as they always would. That is what you can expect.

But here we have a very interesting situation. They are opposing the bill that would seek to ensure people do not use the system for unfair gain when it comes to their claims. They are opposing a bill—and they have already voted against a bill—that is seeking to have people be up-front and say who they are and what their claim is. They think that is not something we should be doing. With these amendments, they are trying to add more cost and more delay into the system where we have a common-sense solution which says oral statements can be provided, particularly in MRT cases, of which there are thousands. The member for McMahon will know how many MRT cases there are. There are thousands. The bill retains the right to have a written statement if one is requested within seven days. You are not getting rid of a written statement. You are just making the system work more efficiently, and you are reducing costs and reducing delay.

On the last point, with these amendments the opposition are actually opposing a practice and policy that they followed in government. When they were in government, it was their policy and practice to use the 'more likely than not' provision to assess complementary protection claims. That is simply what this bill seeks to do, and they are seeking to remove it. We are seeing an opposition that learnt nothing while in government about border protection. They have continued that in opposition. The government will be opposing these amendments.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (20:30): Here we again have the immigration minister mischaracterising this debate. This is about Australia's proud history of promoting protection for those fleeing significant harm and persecution. It is a principle that has been upheld in our law since World War II. This bill, particularly schedule 2, seeks to overturn that significant principle that has been part of Australian values and culture for many, many years.

Complementary protection is a reform that was introduced by Labor. As the shadow minister has pointed out, it applied to those for whom protection was not obliged to be offered under the convention when at times there were circumstances where it was found people should be offered some form of protection. They may not have been refugees under the definition in the convention, but they were afforded protection. That was in circumstances such as genital mutilation or forced marriages for young women in particular societies. These amendments that are before the parliament at the moment seek to change the test in schedule 2 from 'a real chance' of that persecution occurring should someone be returned to 'more likely than not'. It is unfair and it is contrary to international agreements and commitments that Australia has signed up to.

Further, in the Senate inquiry into this particular bill, particularly into schedule 2, it was conceded by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection that the meaning and application of 'more likely than not' was expressed inconsistently between the explanatory memorandum and the minister in the second reading speech. The department's submission was such to the inquiry. The confusion surrounding the threshold for complementary protection centred on whether it would be interpreted by decision makers as 'on a balance of probabilities' or a quantifiable 'greater than 50 per cent real chance' test. These inconsistencies
between the minister and his department's interpretation of the effect of the proposed changes added to Labor's concerns. They could potentially put vulnerable people seeking Australian protection at risk of persecution, death or serious harm if they were returned to their home countries.

Item 17 in schedule 4 on offering oral statements without a requirement for written reasons to be given to an applicant regarding a decision in the Migration Review Tribunal or Refugee Review Tribunal is something that Labor is opposed to. We see no reason for this reform. It is not a big cost. There is no particular reason if an oral statement is given the decision maker should not therefore go on to provide written reasons. For those reasons, the shadow minister has moved the amendments and we seek the support of the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

The House divided. [20:37]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Vasta)

Ayes .....................46
Noes .................... 81
Majority.................35

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Ellis, KM
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gray, G
Hayes, CP
King, CF
Marles, RD
Mitchell, RG
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Rishworth, AL
Snowdon, WE
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wilkie, AD

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT

Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Question negatived.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta) (20:45): The question now is that the bill be agreed to.

The House divided. [20:45]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Vasta)

Ayes .................80
Noes .................46
Majority .............34

AYES

Alexander, JG  Andrews, KJ
Andrews, KL  Baldwin, RC
Billson, BF  Briggs, JE
AYES

Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gillespie, DA
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

Brough, MT
Chester, D
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Gamboro, T
Goodenough, IR
Hartsuyker, L
Henderson, SM
Hockey, JB
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jones, ET
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
O'Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chester, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Ellis, KM
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gray, G
Hayes, CP
King, CF

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Elliott, MJ
Ferguson, LDT
Giles, AJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
Macklin, JL
Monday, 22 September 2014   HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CHAMBER

Marles, RD
Mitchell, RG
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Rishworth, AL
Snowdon, WE
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wilkie, AD

McGowan, C
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Parke, M
Ripoll, BF
Ryan, JC (teller)
Swan, WM
Thomson, KJ
Watts, TG
Zappia, A

Question agreed to.
Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (20:50): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Omnibus Repeal Day (Autumn 2014) Bill 2014

Returned from Senate

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

Crimes Legislation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth and Other Measures) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (20:51): This week I have received many emails and comments on Twitter and Facebook about how the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, is as close as possible to the Liberal Party and the government on national security. I want to point out that most of the legislation in this House is actually supported by both sides of the chamber, and that has been the case for most parliaments. I have only been here since the 42nd Parliament, but it is the case that both sides generally support 80 per cent of the legislation that comes before this chamber. The 43rd Parliament was a little bit different with a minority government and the now Prime Minister who upped the anti by saying 'No' to commonsense legislation. That was an anomaly, most often governments and oppositions work together because they are looking at the national interest.

It will come as no surprise to anyone that the Labor Party will be supporting this piece of legislation. In fact, this legislation was written by the Labor Party. This bill is almost word-for-word identical to the previous Crimes Legislation Amendment (Organised Crime and Other Measures) Bill 2012. That bill was introduced into the House on 28 November 2012

Question agreed to.
Bill agreed to.
and passed on 5 February 2013. Unfortunately, while the bill was introduced into the Senate on 6 February 2013, it lapsed with the sad demise of the 43rd Parliament in September 2013. Hence, I congratulate Minister Keenan on bringing Labor legislation back to the House so that it might become the law of the land.

The unexplained-wealth laws enable a court to issue a declaration unless the subject of proceedings can establish that his or her wealth was lawfully acquired. An assessment is made of the quantum of unexplained wealth and then the subject of the declaration must pay the amount to the relevant jurisdiction. Unexplained-wealth laws are a powerful tool against organised crime. They enable authorities to seize assets that exceed a person's legitimate wealth. This enables the targeting of criminal kingpins who profit from crime without being directly involved in the commission of an offence.

Labor led the way in implementing unexplained-wealth laws. Commonwealth unexplained-wealth laws have been in place since 2010. However, due to the need for a connection with a constitutional head of power, their application is limited to instances where a connection can be established to a Commonwealth or foreign office or a state offence with a Commonwealth aspect. The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement undertook an inquiry into Commonwealth unexplained-wealth legislation and arrangements. The then chair of the committee Chris Hayes—who I always acknowledge as a great member of parliament—has long held a passionate interest and policy expertise in law enforcement matters. The committee's report of March 2012 made an important contribution. That PJCLE recommended in March 2012 that the Commonwealth see the referral of powers from the states and territories in order to legislate for a broad-based national unexplained wealth scheme. The PJCLE found that the unexplained-wealth provisions had not been operating as it had intended when it recommended them in 2009 or as the originating bill first introduced in the same year.

The committee made 18 recommendations for improvement. Recommendations 1, 5 and 8 to 13 worked with specific amendments to the act. Recommendations 2, 3 and 4 concerned the Australian Crime Commission's potential role in supporting unexplained-wealth proceedings. Recommendations 6 and 7 related to improving information sharing between law enforcement agencies and the Australian Taxation Office. Recommendations 14 to 18 related to development of a national unexplained-wealth scheme and international agreements relating to unexplained wealth. Despite assurances from the Commonwealth that the states and territories would continue to obtain any proceeds seized under their own laws, the states and territories have consistently rejected any proposal to refer powers to the Commonwealth and thereby enable a single national scheme.

In June 2013 former police commissioners Mick Palmer and Ken Moroney were appointed by the then minister Jason Clare to negotiate with jurisdictions and to break the deadlock—unfortunately, something that has yet to be achieved. The ABC reported in October 2013 that Mr Palmer and Mr Moroney were due to report to the government within weeks. The minister confirmed recently that this report has indeed been received, but its content and recommendations remain secret. Unfortunately, it seems to be a bit of a habit that the government says one thing in opposition and then does a completely different thing when in government. In government Minister Keenan has failed to keep faith with his rhetoric in opposition. Once again, they said one thing in opposition and then did the opposite. They are
almost in the running for gold medals when it comes to hypocrisy. Minister Keenan criticised the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Organise Crime and Other Measures) Bill 2012 on the grounds that it only implemented six of the 18 recommendations of the PJCLE, and now he brings that very same legislation into this 44th Parliament.

Speaking on the 2012 bill, Minister Keenan said:

I am particularly disappointed by the failure of the government to embrace the recommendations of that parliamentary committee which involve the Australian Crime Commission pursuing unexplained wealth orders. The ACC has significant coercive powers to force witnesses to answer questions, and those significant powers—which are unavailable to other law enforcements agencies—would have been very helpful in pursuing proceeds of crime.

However the bill before the chamber right now does not contain new provisions concerning the work of the ACC. Minister Keenan was using sheer mindless rhetoric when he spoke on the 2012 bill, and his own legislation proves the point—he is hoisted on his own petard. Now Minister Keenan is hoping that short memories will protect him from the fact that in government he has been marked by reality and his inflated claims and fearmongering while in opposition have not survived first contact in government.

The bill does not contain new provisions concerning the work of the Australian Crime Commission. In opposition Minister Keenan was always keen to condemn the Labor government for the level of resourcing enjoyed by agencies such as the ACC, the Customs and Border Protection Service and the Australian Federal Police. Despite Minister Keenan's overblown political rhetoric in opposition, the May budget revealed that the Justice portfolio is anything but immune from Treasurer Hockey's savage budget cuts. The Abbott government announced as part of the 2014-15 budget that it will increase the AUSTRAC supervisory levy. When speaking in the chamber on AUSTRAC, Minister Keenan said:

AUSTRAC does provide a very valuable service but we believe that it is not reasonable to come back and ask the 199 largest users to cover the costs of its running.

However, having denounced Labor's measures in 2011, Minister Keenan effectively demonstrated that he said one thing before the election and then did another in government. I am sure that he will apologise for doing so when he comes to sum up this legislation later. The Australian Federal Police also got its share of empty opposition rhetoric. During a press conference in 2013, Minister Keenan criticised Labor's cuts to the AFP's budget, stating that 'Australia's national security becomes weaker with this latest cut to the AFP's budget'. The May budget exposed that $11.7 million was axed from the Australian Federal Police. These cuts will have a direct impact on the AFP's ability to protect our community, with more than 300 AFP jobs now at risk because of these cuts. These cuts prove that the Abbott government was prepared to say anything to get elected, but that in government that they are quick to break their promises—they folded like Superman on washing day, Madam Speaker.

Debate interrupted.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The SPEAKER: It being 9 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.
Charlton Electorate: Glendale Interchange

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (21:00): Now that the New South Wales Liberal government has, effectively, sold the Port of Newcastle, the proceeds should be used to fund key projects that benefit the Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Hunter regions, primary among which is the Glendale transport interchange. A veritable chorus line of Liberal ministers and premiers have performed the same song-and-dance routine for the people of the Hunter over the past few years, promising us our 'fair share' when it comes to the proceeds of the port sale. However, since signing on the dotted line, the government has hit a sour note. It has been embroiled in a corruption scandal that has claimed the scalps of almost every single Liberal MP from the Hawkesbury to Port Stephens, as well as the Liberal-aligned Mayor of Newcastle. We have heard allegations that individuals—from business groups and from all political persuasions—attempted to distort the approval process for a coal terminal at the port, and that the way Port Botany and Port Kembla were privatised has rendered the prospect of a container terminal at the Port of Newcastle virtually impossible. It is entirely fair for the people of the Hunter to doubt these decisions, and to demand that their elected representatives work collaboratively, in the best interests of the region and its economy.

Based on this, I wish to highlight my own recent experience which has, unfortunately, caused me to question the New South Wales government's approach. I applaud the New South Wales Labor opposition for their recent commitment to return half of the proceeds of the port sale to the region. It is imperative that the allocation of this—or indeed of the government's expenditure—is done in a manner which considers the investment needs of the region more broadly, not just the needs of the inner city. The Glendale transport interchange has been identified by RDA Hunter as priority infrastructure necessary for the continued development and growth of the Hunter, as set out in our regional plan. The 11 combined Hunter councils have unanimously identified it as the most strategically significant infrastructure project in the region. So far, $37.5 million has been forthcoming, from all levels of government, and I understand Lake Macquarie City Council has allocated a significant proportion of this to the current capital works program. But the fact remains that further funding is required to complete the project, which includes building the Pennant Street Bridge in the first stage, and the construction of a railway station in the second stage.

In December last year, I wrote to the then Treasurer, Mike Baird, urging him to allocate funds from the Port of Newcastle sale to keep the momentum on this project going. I was disappointed with his reply, which ruled out further support for the interchange from that transaction. A few months later, upon her appointment as Minister for the Hunter, I wrote to Gladys Berejiklian, drawing her attention to the fact that the New South Wales government is responsible for rail bridges and stations, and that she was in a unique position to seek further funding from the port sale. I did not receive a response. Most recently, after a further $100 million was provided to the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund from the port sale, I sought an urgent meeting with the Chairman, Peter Blackmore, after he had commented publicly that the Glendale interchange may not be considered through this new round. In a bipartisan spirit, I invited local state MPs, Sonia Hornery and Andrew Cornwell, to accompany me to this meeting. The member for Wallsend, who is a vocal advocate for the Glendale interchange, agreed to attend. Unfortunately, the then member for Charlestown refused to join the delegation. Mr Blackmore did not even acknowledge my request, instead
referring my letter to ex-officio member, Bob Hawes, who is the General Manager of the Hunter Development Corporation, a New South Wales government organisation. Mr Hawes refused to meet with me.

As the federal member representing Western Lake Macquarie and Western Newcastle, it is incumbent upon me to pursue opportunities to progress the Glendale interchange, irrespective of the level of government or its political orientation. But when the opportunity arises to secure funds from the sale of a profitable public asset—a significant share of the revenue from which should be invested in the Hunter region—not only elected representatives but also appointed officials should work as hard as possible to secure the best outcome for our community. It is unfortunate that this is not occurring. I want to see the Glendale interchange built. It is a vital piece of infrastructure for our region—a region where it is projected, by Lake Macquarie City Council and by the state government in its regional planning, that 6,000 houses will go in over the next few decades. It is necessary that the Glendale interchange be built, and it requires the cooperation of all levels of government. However, if those tasked with the allocation of these funds are not working in an inclusive way, then they are not working in the best interests of the people of the Hunter.

I call on the New South Wales government to make a strong commitment to the Glendale interchange, and deliver further funding to complete stage one, at the very least, with the proceeds from the sale of our port. Madam Speaker, I would submit that a commitment to the Glendale transport interchange is a commitment to our region, and should be the litmus test for any candidates and any political parties in the upcoming state election.

Safe Night Out Strategy

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (21:05): Madam Speaker, Australia has a fine tradition of enjoying a night out. Being able to go and celebrate with friends is something that our ambient temperature allows us to do all over the country, every month, every night—at least weekend nights—of the year. But we have been assailed by images on television of crime, drug abuse and other antisocial behaviours associated with going out at night. It should be a safe thing to do. No parent deserves to have their child come home in a body bag. No family should lose one of their own simply because of completely out-of-control, alcohol-fuelled violence. That is amplified by illicit drugs and now, more recently, anabolic steroids. In Queensland, I commend the Safe Night Out Strategy, which is the result of probably some of the widest social policy consultation that I have seen from a state government. The precursor for this work is the crackdown on organised crime that we have seen in Queensland, which is paying dividends already with a percentage reduction in crime that is significant in parts of South-East Queensland, Logan and the Gold Coast—where property crime fell by around 11 per cent. I can see that this is part of a long-term trend, but it is a trend in the right direction, and it is a reward for the Newman government, who went where previous state governments were reluctant to go before.

Of course, some of the initiatives in this very complex Safe Night Out Strategy represent what is a multifactorial response to a complex area. It is hard to impinge on the rights of an individual having a drink until there is a very sudden switch and they become a danger to themselves or others. Of course, this issue is complicated by much of this happening in private licenced premises where it is very hard to have constant surveillance available.
I want to make a few points in the limited time available. The first is that we have technology and in these drink safe areas we can link up all of the ID and driver's licence scanning facilities that are available. We need to know everyone who is going in and out of these licensed premises. The second point is that we do not need the superficial Labor response that the solution here is either to curtail the hours of licensed premises or to push out services because the more services that are pushed out the better things will be. Ultimately, it comes back to individual responsibility, hazed as it is by the effects of alcohol. In the end, individuals must be responsible for their actions. If an individual is engaging in antisocial behaviour, failing to move on, failing to follow a police directive—we are not even talking about violent conduct—then there must be swift, painful and immediate consequences for that behaviour. We need to empower the people working on the doors of these premises to be able to sign a statutory declaration and identify that person to make sure that they are dealt with properly.

Let’s go back a step. Why are taxpayers having their money spent on irresponsible and antisocial behaviour? Why is it that we are funding penalty rates for hundreds of people working late at night simply to control alcohol fuelled abuse? That is not good enough. People who contravene these basic social norms need to be paying their way. It is curious to me that, when someone is taken through a court of law and receives a financial penalty, a person who has a job can be garnisheed, but a person who is receiving welfare cannot. So a person who is on a public payment can avoid that and simply have the charges transferred to SPER or the equivalent state debt collection agency, and they can even go to jail in lieu of that penalty, but a person who is earning a private salary can be garnisheed. That is not right; that is not fair.

We need to connect the federal government by recognising state entities, including public housing, under the Social Security Act. It is time that you pay your rent whether it is for public or private housing. It is time that if you take up public housing you agree to a mandatory deduction from your income just as occurs for someone receiving a private income.

Now in Queensland we will see police empowered to move people on, empowered to ban someone for their own good for 24 hours from these precincts or to ban them for a longer period of time. There will be mandatory community service for those who act in an inappropriate and antisocial manner, but it should be way more than the maximum currently allowed in Queensland, a mere 240 hours. Speaker, that is five weeks. What we need is six months of community service for many people who have not had the benefit of parental and social support to give them a chance in life. Let us look after these people, engage them and get them back into work. The surest way to avoid alcohol abuse is to start with a full day's work and a week of work.

The SPEAKER: I would remind members that the correct mode of address to the Speaker is Madam Speaker.

Petition: Marriott Support Services

Ms O’NEIL (Hotham) (21:10): I seek leave to table this petition on behalf of the diligent workers at Marriott Support Services in my electorate. It does not conform perfectly with the requirements of the parliament, but I ask that those who have signed this petition be heard appropriately.
Leave granted.

Ms O'NEIL: Marriott is a supported employment organisation which runs a range of businesses in my electorate. Like all businesses, Marriott is powered by the diligence, the hard work and the commitment of its team.

Many of Marriott's valued employees are people with disability. Of course, that is not their defining feature. These people are members of families. They are friends who provide loved ones with support. They are people with great senses of humour. They are followers of AFL football and members of clubs and community groups, and those who signed this petition are workers too. They are proud that they earn a wage and help support themselves through real and meaningful employment.

The petition urges government, in reviewing the way that wages are set for the workers in organisations like Marriott, to ensure that Marriott can continue to provide employment for the people in the team. The petition outlines reasons why this is important to the 76 signatories. It starts by explaining why many Marriott workers do not want to be in open employment:

- Jobs would be very difficult to find and if we didn't manage to get a job we would just sit at home and become depressed.
- If we did get a job we wouldn't get the training and support we do at Marriott.
- Our supervisors are patient and have experience with people with disabilities.
- There would be no emotional support and employees would become anxious.

They then outline their experience of working in supported employment at Marriott:

- We feel valued and take pride in our work.
- The training is fantastic and repeated until you know the job.
- We share information about work and about our community. We have made friends that we meet with at the weekend and social functions.
- The work's good, meaningful and predictable.

I was so fortunate to be welcomed to Marriott a few months ago to talk with their employees. I have to say that I have rarely seen such a great team. I saw about 40 employees supporting one another and being productive. Their work is important and it is valuable, and that is how it makes them feel. These workers believe in hard work, they believe in commitment and they believe in creating something of value. For them, those values are embodied in having a job. I was lucky to run into my old school friend Olivia Curtain, who is now a Marriott assistant team leader and managing a group of people in a thorough, efficient and kind way.

All of us in this chamber want people with disability to have choices. For that to happen, we have to allow people with disability to speak for themselves. It is a great privilege today to be able to provide a voice, in a very direct manner, to a group of Australians who are often not directly heard by our society and our decision makers.

You would be aware that there is significant policy debate underway in this parliament about how we support people with disability to work and specifically about how their wages should be set. This is a very complex area, but there are some simple but important principles that we have to uphold. One of those is that employment matters. Having a job really matters. Another is that people receive fair pay for the work that they do. People with disability should...
be supported to find and keep work and to have a real choice over the kind of work that they do.

One other important truth in this matter is that some Australians with disability want to work in supported employment, and that decision should be respected.

I know this not from a newspaper article or from the view of advocates or lawyers or academics; I know this because of the 76 people who have signed the petition that I table today and because of the conversations that I had with the workers at Marriott. That is what they have asked me to convey to the chamber tonight. It has been my honour to do so.

I trust that members present tonight and their colleagues will take the chance to review the words of these constituents—I will be forwarding their letter to you—and to give these Australians the influence and recognition that their voice deserves.

The SPEAKER: The document will be forwarded to the Standing Committee on Petitions for its consideration. It will be accepted subject to confirmation by the committee that it conforms to the standing orders.

Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School: 75th Anniversary

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (21:15): This weekend in Tamworth a very special event will take place. It will be a celebration of 75 years of Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School. Farrer was established in 1939 and named in memory of William Farrer, the famous breeder of wheat. He bred a variety called Federation, which was instrumental in establishing Australia's cropping industry. Farrer Memorial is a New South Wales government owned boarding school set on 474 acres of land on the outskirts of Tamworth. Originally it was set up as a training ground for young men who were interested in a career in agriculture. Indeed, agriculture still underpins the curriculum at that school.

I was a student at Farrer from 1970 to the end of 1975. Next year will be 40 years since I left. I still have very fond memories, despite the fact that sometimes rose-coloured glasses come into play when you look back at your school years. As a 12-year-old responsible for milking cows at 4.30 on a winter's morning in Tamworth, it was not only character building but it was a place where great friendships were forged. In the time that I was at Farrer we saw a transition. In 1939 the original headmaster was Clarrie James, a well-regarded and loved gentleman, followed by Edgar Smiles. I managed to be a student for a couple of years under Edgar Smiles. When Norm Pether became the principal, we saw a dramatic turnaround. We saw the farm used more for agricultural experiment and education; whereas up until that time it had been run as a commercial enterprise.

While many of the students that go through Farrer study agriculture, quite frankly, not many of them end up in a career in agriculture. Some of my contemporaries include entertainers, the Director of Opera Australia and people who have made a career in law, finance and, dare I say it, even politics. The basic principles that we learnt at Farrer about looking after your mates, about being independent, about thinking for yourself and about being resourceful certainly carried us through our lives. It will be a great experience to be there to celebrate 75 years of this wonderful institution.

I played Rugby League while I was at Farrer, not to any great heights. Certainly the code of Rugby League underpins a lot of the school spirit. Many players who made it into the first grade of the NRL and many who now have senior positions in management at the NRL made
their way through the ranks at Farrer school. I was one of the more average players of the second 13, but I certainly have very fond memories of that time.

I pay my respects to all those people who have been involved—teachers and students, those still living and those who have passed on—and hope we can take time to reflect on 75 years of a wonderful institution, one that I was very proud to be a student of and one that I hope will continue for many years to come.

**Budget**

**Mr CLARE** (Blaxland) (21:20): Of all the terrible things in the budget—and there are plenty of them—I think the $7 tax to go to the doctor would have to be the worst. We in Australia have one of the best health systems in the world. One of the reasons we have one of the best health systems in the world is that if you get sick you know you will be looked after, regardless of how rich or poor you are. Making people pay $7 to go to the doctor throws a grenade into that system. It means that people will decide whether or not to go to the doctor based on whether they can afford to rather than on whether they are sick. I know this because I can see it having an impact in my electorate even before it has been introduced.

In the week after the tax was announced in the budget, visits to the doctor in my electorate dropped by about one-third. That is the advice of local GPs in my electorate. Why did this happen? It happened because people thought the tax had already started. Doctors had to send out emails to their patients telling them that the tax had not started yet. Seven dollars does not sound like a lot of money to some people, but it is a lot of money to a lot of people in my electorate. If you have got a few sick kids who need blood tests and X-rays, the costs can ratchet up quickly. These costs affect the decisions that people make.

One mum came into my office and said that she has three kids and that if the three kids get sick she will take one to the doctor and get a script and share it amongst them. That is a real story. That should put dread into the hearts and minds of any thinking member of parliament. This is a tax that will encourage people to make bad decisions like that. It will discourage people from going to the doctor. That is what the purpose of this tax is. The budget papers indicate that it is expected that money will be saved from one million fewer visits to the doctor every year. By putting people off going to the doctor, it means that sick people will just get sicker.

And where will this hurt most? The answer to that question is Western Sydney. My electorate in Western Sydney has the second-highest bulk billing rate in the country—98.2 per cent of visits to the doctor in my electorate are bulk billed. That means that when you go to the doctor the only thing you pull out of your wallet or your purse is your Medicare card. That is the case right across Western Sydney—the top 10 bulk billing electorates across Australia are all in Western Sydney. That means that this tax will hit Western Sydney harder than anywhere else. The Prime Minister claims that Western Sydney is the new Liberal Party heartland. Well, this is how he repays Western Sydney—with a tax that will hurt them more than other parts of the country.

There are a lot of reasons the budget is unpopular—the cuts to health, the cuts to education, the cuts to the pension, the doubling of university degree fees. But this is the big one. In the last few months I have been holding street meetings across my electorate, encouraging people to sign a petition against this tax. Whenever I do that I get a queue of people lining up to sign
the petition. I already have more than 1½ thousand people who have signed this petition, and before I table it there will be more people who will sign it as well. People are angry about this. They are worried. They do not like it. This is a tax that is as popular as anthrax. It is little wonder that we heard nothing about this before the election. Health care is a right; it is not a privilege, and it should not be thought of as a privilege for people who can afford it. Australia does not want a healthcare system like America's, where it depends on how much money you have. If you are sick, you should be looked after—whether you are rich or whether you are poor. This is a bad tax. I urge the government to listen to the people of my community, to listen to the people of Western Sydney, to listen to the stories of people right across Australia, and to ditch this bad tax.

Work for the Dole

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (21:24): I rise to commend the government's new Work for the Dole arrangements and to share the successes and benefits the program is bringing to my electorate of Petrie. In the Petrie electorate we are facing a high level of unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, and we have been for quite some time. So it is great to see the government taking measures that will give job seekers practical experience that they can use to their advantage at their next job interview. It saddens me to read opinion pieces online commenting that Work for the Dole will not help people find work. For one, are these journalists so pessimistic that they think there is no hope for job seekers except for a life on welfare? And if these journalists are qualified enough to discredit the program—even though most have not spoken to anyone on the Work for the Dole program—shouldn't they be qualified to present an alternative option?

I am not an investigative journalist, but I did do some investigation myself. Over the past two weeks I visited two Work for the Dole placement areas in my electorate and spoke with program participants and coordinators. I wanted to see for myself what tasks job seekers were doing under the program, whether they thought it was worthwhile and how the program was going overall. It surprised me to hear the following remark from the Work for the Dole coordinators at both sites I visited. They said to me: 'These people are doing great work. It's a shame we're losing so many because they're actually finding jobs.' What a positive outcome—that so many local job seekers involved in the program are actually finding work. Congratulations to those participants involved who have landed a job. One of the Work for the Dole placement sites I visited was the Redcliffe PCYC. I met with the participants there and they showed me the new kitchen that they had just renovated and the new timber deck they were installing as well. These job seekers now have a story to tell future employers. When they go to that job interview they will be able to say, 'Yes, I have been helping a not-for-profit organisation by doing some plastering, painting, installing a new kitchen and building a new deck, and I've learnt some valuable skills that will help your organisation.'

Employers are looking for people who are not sitting around while they are waiting for jobs but are proactively improving their skills to enhance their job opportunities. Employment agencies match a person's career objective with their placement; this means they are learning skills that will be vital to their career direction. The men I met at the PCYC who were participating in the Work for the Dole program had all learned new skills, and some had even landed work, as I mentioned, which was great to see.
I strongly believe that the best form of welfare is a job. As my colleague Treasurer Joe Hockey says, the government will spend around 35 per cent of the federal budget on welfare in the next financial year alone. We spend more on welfare than we do on health, education and even defence. We have a very comprehensive welfare system. It is in place to be a safety net—to help people get back on their feet and to live independently. The Work for the Dole scheme is part of that safety net. It gives job seekers opportunities to keep in the loop, to further their skills, to further their work experience and, ultimately, of course, to find work. The program is a win-win situation. It is a win for the participants in the program as they find valuable new skills and it also helps the local community organisations to get some new things built.

I had the chance to talk to a number of participants, and I asked them: ‘What is it that you are really looking for? What sort of job do you want to achieve?’ One of the men said that he wanted to be a plumber, and I thought that was great. I said to him: ‘You should go for that. You should really try to achieve that goal. It might take you four months, five months or six months to find an apprenticeship, or it might take five years. But if you know what it is that you want to achieve, you will be able to do it.’ I would encourage all community groups in the electorate of Petrie to contact my office if you are interested in taking on a Work for the Dole placement. It is a great opportunity to engage with the community, to help to train up some people who are looking for work and to get some things done at your local community organisation.

The SPEAKER: It being 9:30 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 21:30

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr McCormack: To move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Project JP154 Phase 1—Defence Counter Improvised Explosive Device Capability Facilities and Infrastructure Project.

Mr McCormack: To move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Project JP3029 Phase 2—Defence Space Surveillance Telescope Facilities Project.

Ms Rishworth: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that World Sight Day (WSD) is being held on 9 October 2014, with this year’s theme being No More Avoidable Blindness;

(2) recognises that:

(a) WSD is an important international event for raising awareness about avoidable blindness and vision loss; and

(b) blindness and vision loss can have a profound impact on the lives of those affected by it;

(3) acknowledges:
(a) the importance of providing support to those who live with blindness and vision loss to enable them to lead fulfilling lives; and

(b) our Eye Health Heroes around the country who deliver quality eye health care every day to those who need it; and

(4) calls on the Government to:

(a) improve access to preventive vision care and treatment and provide support to those living with blindness and vision loss; and

(b) take action to eliminate avoidable blindness and vision loss.

Mr Entsch: To move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that Marine National Park (Green) Zones as defined in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003 serve to better protect the biodiversity within the Marine Park and help to ensure:

(a) the continued existence of the unique marine animals, plants and habitats that are found only in the Great Barrier Reef and provide additional protection for threatened species such as dugong and marine turtles;

(b) those industries that rely on the health of the Marine Park are able to continue providing social and economic benefits to local communities and the wider economy;

(c) a diverse range of other benefits and values of the Marine Park, including recreational, cultural, educational and scientific values, are protected; and

(d) that future generations are able to continue to use and enjoy the Marine Park;

(2) accepts that Marine National Park (Green) Zones can be beneficial in:

(a) protecting spawning areas and nursery grounds;

(b) minimising damage to important habitats;

(c) providing refuge for protected species, such as turtles and dugongs;

(d) boosting species numbers, which helps the food web as a whole;

(e) increasing the abundance of fish; and

(f) building the resilience of the reef against threats such as climate change and water pollution;

(3) affirms the Native Title Act 1993 which recognises the right of certain traditional owners to hunt and gather in their sea country and that native title holders may, as of right, undertake traditional use of marine resources;

(4) recognises that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is working with traditional owners for the protection of the Great Barrier Reef, by expanding the Traditional Use of the Marine Resources Agreement program and strengthening communications between local communities, managers and reef stakeholders;

(5) acknowledges the value of the Ranger Program in providing job opportunities for Indigenous people to care for their country, take on important skills, develop career pathways, protect dugongs and turtles and manage environmental threats stemming from feral animals, among other benefits;

(6) undertakes legislative change to prohibit the capture and killing of any species from designated Green Zones within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park area, including when that animal is taken for cultural and ceremonial purposes.

(7) legislates that when turtle and dugong are taken for cultural and ceremonial purposes.
(8) recognises that this initiative would complement a range of measures already being implemented under the Government’s Turtle and Dugong Protection Plan and Community Management Plans, which will enhance the protection of marine turtles and dugongs in Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) took the chair at 10:30.

STATEMENTS

Federation Chamber: 20th Anniversary

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) (10:30): Before I invite honourable members to make constituency statements, I wish to make a statement to record the fact that this year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the operation of this chamber. The occasion is being acknowledged with some physical enhancements to the Federation Chamber, commencing with the new screens which have been installed on the side walls, adjacent to the television lights. These screens display the current item of business and the question before the chair. The trial arrangement which was in place prior to this meeting was met with general approval from members, so this more formal installation of screens has now taken place.

I foreshadow that members will notice in the coming weeks further enhancements to the Federation Chamber to improve the facility and the authority of the Federation Chamber. Further enhancements will include improved signage at the chamber entrance, a central table in front of the Deputy Speaker's chair to accommodate chamber documents, new lecterns, a new coat of arms, some artwork and a redesigned front desk for the Deputy Speaker and the clerks, in addition to some general maintenance.

In marking this important milestone, I will make a few points in relation to the 20 years of operation of this Federation Chamber, which was renamed in 2012 from the original Main Committee. I would like to note that it was Madam Speaker Bishop's suggestion way back—I think 10 years ago—that the name could change from the Main Committee to the Federation Chamber. That has now been achieved.

It was at 10 am on Wednesday, 8 June 1994 that the then Deputy Speaker, Harry Jenkins, the former member for Scullin, took the chair for the inaugural meeting of the second debating chamber of the House of Representatives, then called the Main Committee. Following from the 1993 report of the House Standing Committee on Procedure About time: bills, questions and working hours, this second debating chamber was established so that the House could deal more effectively with the high legislative workload without sacrificing opportunity for members to speak to bills and without increasing the number of sitting days or hours. The Federation Chamber has achieved that objective and more.

The Federation Chamber began, and remains, a body that is subordinate to the House. Its business is referred by the House, effectively, and its decisions are reported to and confirmed by the House. Cooperation has been the foundation of its success, especially noting the need for unanimity on decisions made in the Federation Chamber.

In its inaugural year, the Main Committee began with a modest workload, meeting for some 61 hours. Over the following years, the meeting hours grew, reaching a peak of some 377 hours in 2011. This total reflects the level of work for the House during the period of minority government, which brought about a surge in opportunities for private members to speak and propose debate on subjects of their own choosing in addition to debating time for scrutinising government bills.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
For many years the Federation Chamber has been the venue where committee reports have been debated and significant motions that began their life in the House have been considered further. It has been a significant factor in the House's ability to respond in a timely manner in dealing with the myriad changing issues that affect parliaments in these times.

The Federation Chamber has enabled the House to undertake experiments in terms of procedure and equipment, with permanent changes occurring only after innovations have been tried and tested. From today, as members might have noticed, screens now have been placed in the chamber itself following on the success of the trial arrangements in the Federation Chamber. I believe this process of innovation, review and incremental change has been integral to the success of the Federation Chamber in its own right as well as its value to the House.

In noting the success, I acknowledge the contribution of my predecessors, including the current member for Chisholm, and I thank members of the Speaker's panel who preside here as Deputy Speaker, the whips and all members of staff for their support in the successful operation of the Federation Chamber. I look forward to its continuing success.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (10:35): On indulgence—I would like to congratulate the government on extending the role of and improving this chamber. I have spent a lot of time in the Federation Chamber during my time in parliament, and I know that it is a very important part of the way this parliament works. I think that raising and elevating its importance by making it very visible will only help debate within this parliament and will help improve the general knowledge of the parliament for people in the community. So I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, and the government.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Richmond Electorate: Employment

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (10:36): People on the New South Wales North Coast have many concerns with the actions of this cruel Liberal-National Party government. They have concerns about the doctor tax and the petrol tax. As well as the impact of the unfair budget, another major issue is this government's attack upon workers, its attack on penalty rates and also its unfair moves towards outsourcing, which threatens jobs, particularly in regional areas.

We have a situation where Liberal-National Party backbenchers are regularly in the media calling for penalty rates to be reviewed, which of course means slashed. That is their ultimate goal. Make no mistake about it: this would result in a return to the days of Work Choices. So many people in my electorate remember how devastating Work Choices was upon their working conditions. There are at least 10 coalition members who have publicly said penalty rates need to be reviewed. When a Liberal-National Party MP says 'reviewed', we know that is code for 'cut'.

The impact of cutting penalty rates in electorates like Richmond would be devastating. This was confirmed in the recent study by the McKell Institute titled The economic impact of penalty rate cuts on rural New South Wales. The report examined the effects of cuts to penalty rates for those working in regional electorates in the retail industry, an industry which relies heavily on penalty rates. The study found that the economic impact of penalty rate cuts would result in a loss of income of $22.6 million a year collectively for the 6,700 retail workers in my electorate of Richmond. These cuts to penalty rates represent a 16.6 per cent
loss in take-home pay for the average worker in Richmond. The study also highlighted that cutting penalty rates for retail workers would mean a loss of $6.5 million to local businesses—a huge amount.

At the last election I had National Party members in my area publicly running around saying they wanted to see penalty rates slashed, and they continue to do that. Labor will fight these unfair plans they have to cut the pay of local workers. We will also fight to protect working conditions and against the very unfair moves we see by this government in terms of outsourcing.

We saw the government announce last week that it will outsource Centrelink and Medicare call centre work to Telstra. This action threatens jobs, privacy and service standards. The Department of Human Services employs nearly 7,000 workers in its Medicare and Centrelink call centres, many of them in regional and outer suburban areas. In fact, this action could have a major impact in my electorate, as there is a very large Centrelink call centre in Tweed Heads. These employees deliver very, very high standards in often extremely difficult circumstances as well.

At this stage, the terms of the contract that the government is proposing to enter into with Telstra are not clear, and there are still many unanswered questions. People in my electorate want to know how many local jobs will be cut as a result of these decisions. Also, will Telstra be able to use third-party call centre operators, as it does with its own call centre network? Will call centre work be sent offshore, where Telstra operates call centres? And it is not exactly clear how the privacy of Medicare and Centrelink confidential records will in fact be protected. All of these unanswered questions need to be answered by the Abbott government.

This decision by the Abbott government is yet another attack on the good staff of the Department of Human Services. These actions, along with their constant threat to cut penalty rates as well, are another cruel act by a very cruel government. We see the ir attacks on workers when it comes to penalty rates, and now we see these threats in terms of outsourcing these very important roles. There are many people in my electorate who are very concerned and many at the Centrelink call centre who are very worried about the future of their jobs.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (10:39): I proudly rise to speak about the sporting prowess of the electorate of Calare, particularly in this time of grand finals. I am keen on sport, particularly team sport, which is good for the young particularly. At the moment our competitions are drawing to a close.

First the mighty Molong Magpies, from my own home town, pulled off an incredible come-from-behind win to snatch victory in the GrainCorp southern division rugby union grand final. I was able to be at the game and witness both Molong and Blayney put on a terrific spectacle. It was basically won in extra time, with a fantastic Molong score in injury time to snatch the win, which gave them back-to-back premierships.

Bathurst St Pats ended a four-year drought in group 10 rugby league when they gave Cowra a bit of a touch-up. Making the effort even more impressive was the fact that Cowra actually beat St Pats on St Pats home turf in Bathurst in the qualifying final, but St Pats turned it around when it mattered most. I am told they celebrated long and hard, as indeed you might.
CSU, Charles Sturt University, topped off a great Centennial Coal Cup season when they beat Blackheath in their grand final. CSU yellow dominated the entire season. They lost just one match on their way to the premiership. It was a massive effort from the club, especially considering that they have a huge change in their playing roster each year depending upon who has left uni and who is going to it.

In Calare's premier hockey competition it was Lithgow that dominated for both men and women. The Lithgow Panthers men managed to score back-to-back titles, while the women scored their fifth, their second premiership in the space of three years. Both sides have dominated the competition for nearly a decade now, a fantastic effort considering that they come up to towns that have much bigger populations and lots more players to choose from.

While there are always stories of success, sadly the Orange Emus could not quite win Calare's premier rugby union competition, falling at the final hurdle. They did, however, give Dubbo an almighty fright in the grand final and should be proud of their efforts, as they came from last in 2013 to the grand final this year. Unfortunately, Dubbo also got over the top of the Parkes Spacemen, who went down in a terrific fight, 34 to 22, on Sunday.

These are not the only sports in which the people of Calare do well, but they are the ones I mention today. The team sports do such a fantastic thing, not just for rural and regional people and for Calare. Team sport is the best thing for young people. It teaches them, whether they want to or not, to communicate and to give their all.

Strong, Major Rod and Major Denice

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (10:42): I wish to acknowledge the long and devoted service of Majors Rod and Denice Strong, who have now retired from the Salvation Army, and the particular contribution they have made to our country, to our state and also in Blair. They were both born on the Sunshine Coast, Rod in Wondai and Denice in Nambour. After school, Rod became an electrician and Denice a shop assistant. They met and married in 1971 and entered the Salvation Army training college in Nambour after feeling the call of God to the vocation of ministry.

After college they were appointed to the Moree Corps and then also to Armidale. Rod worked in the Salvation Army public relations department in Sydney. During that time he became involved in Red Shield Defence. After Sydney he was appointed to Orange and then Mount Gravatt. During his four years at Mount Gravatt, Rod served as the southern area director for Brisbane Salvation Army Emergency Services. They successfully worked together in the Nundah, Sandgate and Zillmere corps to form the North Brisbane Corps. During four years there, Rod served as the northern area director of the Salvation Army Emergency Services and spent four more years in public relations in Brisbane. Denice served as secretary for the divisional League of Mercy.

To the great benefit of the people of Ipswich, the Strongs arrived in Ipswich thereafter. They spent six years at the Bundamba Corps, also running the Blackbutt Salvation Army as an outpost for three years. They then crossed the Tasman to New Zealand and were appointed to Christchurch City Corps in Hope Centre, in Christchurch.

On their return to Australia, Rod was appointed chaplain for Employment Plus, with responsibility for an area stretching from Rockhampton to Newcastle. For six years Denice served as aged-care chaplain at Riverview Gardens in Ipswich.
Since 2008, Rod and Denice have served as chaplains with 3RAR, based at Coorparoo, caring for veterans from the Vietnam and Korea wars. Denice has served as chaplain in the Redbank RSL sub-branch since 1997. In 2011, Rod was appointed senior chaplain to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. Denice, the following year, was appointed family support chaplain to assist Rod with his work.

This theme runs for 42 years of selfless service to the community and to their God. They have been a source of comfort for countless people. They have assisted people through floods and in crises man made and natural. They have helped through fire and disaster. They have touched the lives of vulnerable people. They are there at the Bundamba Salvation Army Anzac Day service every year, and Rod's work with Rotary in Ipswich is exemplary. He was the president of the Rotary Club of Ipswich. He handed on that responsibility to his son, Brad, who followed him into the ministry of the Salvation Army. On behalf of the people of Blair, I extend my heartfelt thanks to wonderful individuals, Rod and Denice, for their enduring service to their God and their community and wish them the best for their futures.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiteley): I thank the honourable member, and thank God for the Salvos.

Forde Electorate: Logan Seniors Ambassadors

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (10:45): I rise to speak today in recognition of some of the outstanding seniors who have been recognised recently as Seniors Ambassadors for Logan.

In 2009 Robin Gallen was named Seniors Ambassador of the Year for her role as President of the Crestmead 40+ club and, in addition, being an active member of the Logan Seniors Network. Robin has recently resigned from her role as President of the Crestmead 40+ club to focus on a new role as a volunteer at the Logan Entertainment Centre. We could not have a better member of our community representing Logan's seniors. Robin absolutely loves Logan and she says she would never live anywhere else. She also has a great interest in the community and gets involved as much as she can-and sometimes I think her husband, Jim, wishes she would spend a bit more time at home.

Last year another constituent, Ann Raymond, was also named Logan's Seniors Ambassador for 2013. Ann volunteers at the Animal Welfare League and the Logan Hospital children's ward as well as being a court support worker. Ann says she has been a volunteer most of her life. She is passionate about giving back to the local community and enjoys a sense of fulfilment achieved through helping others.

This year I am proud to say that another Forde senior has been given the title. Mary Bickerdike has been involved in the local community for some 30 years. She volunteers for the Cancer Council promoting the 'Slip, Slop, Slap' program through local schools. She is also Vice-President of the Logan City Theatre Company. Mary is also a member of the Logan Mayoress' Community Service Committee and is passionate about helping those less fortunate, often visiting people who have been through tough times to offer support and assistance. As a fundraiser, Mary has been involved in many numerous toy drives, food parcels, raffles and barbecues to raise money for the Logan mayoress community benefit fund, which last year raised more than $200,000 and helped over 30 local community groups and charities as a result.
I am extremely humbled by the efforts of Robin, Ann and Mary in the local community. They are tremendous assets to the local community. But there are many more seniors also following in their footsteps. It is our seniors that are the backbone of the majority of our volunteer organisations. I would like to take this opportunity to formally acknowledge the many seniors in Forde who do wonderful community work and make our community what it is. I look forward to catching up with many of them at our annual Forde Seniors Expo this Friday.

**Invictus Games**

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (10:48): The Invictus Games were held in London from 9 to 14 September and I would like to acknowledge Darren McManus-Smith from the South Lake Macquarie RSL Sub Branch, who played a very important role in the Australian team. Darren is the Australian Returned and Services League veteran team manager. He was selected by the RSL National President, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan, to take on this role and lead our contingent at the games, which is an international sporting competition for servicemen and servicewomen of the armed forces who have been wounded or injured or are ill as a result of their service to their country. The games focused on the power of sport to inspire recovery and support rehabilitation amongst the wounded warriors, and following the success of this event future games are now in discussion.

Team Invictus Australia was made up of current members of the ADF and veterans primarily from the recent Middle East conflicts. The team consisted of 21 veterans and 15 current servicemen and servicewomen from across Australia as well as their family members or carers. Our Aussie team was the third largest at the meet, which saw 13 nations and more than 400 athletes come together for the games to compete in world-class venues at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

Competitors took part in nine adaptive sports and, whilst I understand the medal tally was not officially recorded, our Australian team was certainly successful, winning close to 20 medals in events such as athletics, cycling, archery, swimming and rowing. Darren McManus-Smith described the team as a group of ‘highly motivated individuals’ and says that for the veterans:

… it is a great honour to represent Australia once again, but this time instead of wearing a military uniform they are wearing a sporting uniform.

I think Darren has summed up what makes his approach to rehabilitation so significant. Each of these athletes overcame challenges to train for and participate in these games, and this is good for their own development, but of course it is an inspiration for those around them. Following the games, the members of Team Invictus Australia are travelling to a variety of locations on the Western Front, where they will hold small services to honour fallen Australian servicemen who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the First World War. I would like to acknowledge the RSL sub-branches from across Lake Macquarie which provided the financial support to send local members to the Invictus Games.

As we gear up for the Centenary of Anzac, it is important not just that we honour their sacrifice but that we commit to looking after current veterans from more recent conflicts. It is important that we do both to honour the sacrifice of all those who have died in this country's name. I would like to extend my congratulations to Darren McManus-Smith, who contributes...
enormously to our local community through the sub-branch and to the Returned and Services League more generally through his role as a state councillor.

**Taxation**

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (10:51): There are many things that stand in the way of advancement for developing countries. The media highlights famine, civil war, a lack of resources, disease and in some cases unelected governments and dictators. These are all very unfortunate factors, but there are other factors that come into play, and one in particular did not get the attention it deserves until more recently. This factor, this hurdle, is tax avoidance and evasion, and it drains developing countries of vital revenue they need for development and for the reduction of poverty.

I had the pleasure of meeting Simon Kennedy, a constituent in my electorate of Petrie who was highly involved in the Micah Challenge. The group recently attended Parliament House and conducted some information sessions, and I met with them there. I learned that according to research undertaken by the UK aid and development agency—Christian Aid as well—multinational companies cheat developing countries out of at least $160 billion in tax revenue every single year. That is a significant amount of money.

It is important for companies to pay tax in the countries in which they operate so that they give back to those countries and help them develop. Tax revenue can help make governments accountable to their citizens, while aid can make them accountable to the interests of foreign donors. A country's sovereignty, of course, is important, so it is important that they have a good tax base to pay for the infrastructure, defence forces, health services, federal police and other federal government responsibilities that will help developing countries build the infrastructure and create the jobs and everything that they need in those areas.

Of course, it may be legal for some of these multinational companies to shift their tax, but morally it is probably bankrupt. This year the G20 will work to develop a road map to assist developing countries to overcome obstacles to exchanging tax information with other countries. This will help developing countries address tax evasion. The summit will also produce a report outlining the unique impacts of base erosion and profit shifting in low-income countries and what the G20 can do to assist developing countries to overcome these. We are making sure developing countries can participate in the G20, and I look forward to the summit's outcomes.

**National Security**

Mr CLARE (Blaxland) (10:54): This is my first opportunity in the parliament to speak about the events of last week, many of which were focused in my electorate. A number of the raids and arrests took place there. I want to put on record my thanks to the Australian Federal Police, to the New South Wales police and to the other national security agencies involved. I have been privileged to work closely with most of them over the last few years as a minister, and I know that the work they do is not only very important but very difficult. The work they do is critical in keeping our community safe.

The alleged plot they thwarted is terrifying. It is intended to be. If proved true, it shows that what is happening on the other side world, the mess in Mesopotamia, can poison the minds of people with enough hate to do the most evil things here in Australia.
I represent an electorate with many Muslim Australians. The overwhelming majority are good, honest, hardworking people, as horrified by this as every other Australian. Dr Jamal Rifi, a great mate of mine, wrote in The Daily Telegraph on Friday that there is a great sense of relief in the Muslim community that this alleged plot was nipped in the bud. But there is also a feeling of isolation; people are angry that their religion has been hijacked by extremists. They are also frustrated that they constantly have to prove that they are Australian, and they are worried that they are going to be targeted because of the actions of a few. This is a real risk. I see it happening already.

A friend of mine, Amer, has a young son. His son turned 11 just the other day. In the last few years, his biggest issue has been whether he cheers on the Eels or whether he supports the Bulldogs. On Friday he came home and he asked his dad, 'Dad, why does everybody hate us?' This worries me a lot, because it is exactly what organisations like ISIS want. They prey on people feeling isolated. They prey on people feeling like they do not belong, because if people feel like they do not belong then they are going to be more susceptible to the types of hateful, poisonous messages that are being preached by organisations like ISIS. Tackling this problem requires more than just laws, and it requires more than just the good work of our law enforcement agencies. It also requires more than just the help of community and religious leaders, parents, teachers, health professionals and youth workers. It requires the help of every Australian to make sure that we are everything that organisations like ISIS despise: that we are a free and tolerant people and that we live in a country where everyone feels like they belong.

Macarthur Electorate: NOVA Employment

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (10:57): Today I wish to share the wonderful work that NOVA Employment is doing in Macarthur to support people living with disabilities to find employment. NOVA Employment is an organisation that provides employment programs that specialise in job-seeking assistance and post-placement support for people with intellectual or physical disabilities and those who have significant barriers to work.

I would like to particularly draw attention to NOVA's recent campaign to find 100 jobs for people living with a disability in Macarthur in 100 days. NOVA's Focus on Ability in Macarthur campaign has already transformed the lives of 65 Macarthur residents. The campaign involved placing job seekers with a disability in a range of different jobs across numerous industries including construction, manufacturing, retail, warehouse and administration. Employment has given these local residents a strong sense of accomplishment, pride and independence as they transition into the workforce. The Camden Advertiser reported on one of the campaign's success stories, Thomas Borland. Mr Borland thought that his disability would always exclude him from employment until NOVA assisted him to prepare for the workforce. I congratulate Mr Borland on his courage and strong determination in seeking employment and for adding his name to the list of successful job seekers. I also acknowledge Macarthur employers for opening their hearts and minds to these new employment opportunities. I encourage more local businesses to take up the wonderful employment opportunities that NOVA is developing into the future.

This year NOVA Employment is also running their sixth consecutive Focus on Ability short film competition. The competition aims to raise awareness of the abilities of people with a disability and to showcase extremely talented disabled people. NOVA Employment CEO
Martin Wren said the competition was aimed at making people look beyond the obvious to see the talents of those with a disability. The competition culminates in an awards night held at Hoyts Cinema, Fox Studios, Sydney on 4 September 2014, with entrants having a chance to see their films premiered on the big screen and a chance to have their films shown on national television.

NOVA Employment's creative initiatives are important for breaking down social stigmas about people's ability to work with a disability. On my recent visit to NOVA's Camden branch I had the opportunity to see firsthand the positive impact of the organisation's services. During my visit I was fortunate to meet with Kylee Franks, NOVA's wonderful job coach, as well as NOVA clients Tayler, Lucas and Christopher, who told me about their positive experiences at NOVA and the skills they are learning at the centre. After learning about the impact that NOVA's programs have had in the lives of Macarthur residents, I am excited to have local trainees participating in work placements within my office in the coming weeks. I am honoured to represent a community that works so hard to support one another to improve the livelihoods of all members of our local community. I commend NOVA Employment for the employment opportunities they are creating for those living with disabilities within Macarthur and I encourage NOVA to keep up the wonderful work they are doing to change the lives of so many local residents.

**Shortland Electorate: Positive Behaviour for Learning**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (11:00): On Thursday last week I visited Windale Public School for the official launch of the school's Positive Behaviour for Learning framework program. The school has chosen three key indicators or target areas that they want to work towards—respectful, safe and responsible—and Lucky Lizard is their emblem for this program. The program operates across the state and there are 150 schools in the Hunter that are involved in it. Windale is part of a cluster of schools, which includes Wiripaang, Mount Hutton, Lakeside School and Hunter Sports High School. The program covers preschool to year 12, and it is about developing positive outcomes. It is a framework or a structure and it runs across all areas, from the playground to lessons, and the coordinator for the Hunter, Nicole Mulhearn, is coordinating what is happening across all of the schools.

In the area where Windale school is part of that cluster, all of the schools liaise and work together. It was great to see the principals from all of the schools there giving support to Windale Public School on the day. We heard from students and we heard from teachers; the whole of the school danced together and invited all of the official guests and parents to join in and do the dance with them.

There are visual reinforcements used at each of the schools. And while Windale Public School has Lucky Lizard as its emblem, in Wiripaang it is Wiri the Eagle and in Mount Hutton it is Dunkley the Kookaburra. Each emblem relates to an aspect of that school—Dunkley was the land where Mount Hutton was born; Wiripaang means 'eagle'. When you go to these schools, visual reinforcements are used such as 'Wiri please enter here' at the gate and 'Dunkley, line up here'. This is a great program that is having really positive outcomes. It is a framework or a structure that goes across the whole of the school. It is something that the school communities in all of these schools have embraced and it is welcomed by parents, students and the whole of that community.
Swan Electorate: Sport

Mr IRONS (Swan) (11:03): Although Australia may be a culturally diverse country which has taken on and quite often become dominant in many sports that did not originate here, I am proud that our No. 1 sport remains that which Australia created and fostered—that is, the Australian Football League. I congratulate Sydney and Hawthorn for making the grand final this coming weekend.

I have spoken in this place previously about the potential for one of Western Australia's AFL club, the West Coast Eagles, to move their training and administration facilities from the outdated Patersons Stadium in Subiaco to Lathlain Park in my electorate of Swan. I proposed this idea to the club's Chief Executive Officer, Trevor Nisbett, in 2010 as part of my local campaign to develop community infrastructure in Swan and my recognition of the potential that Lathlain Park held for the club as a multipurpose facility.

I have progressively worked with the Eagles behind the scenes to develop and advocate for this relocation, and today I am pleased to update the House that earlier this month the site was officially secured, with the club signing a 99-year lease agreement with the town of Victoria Park. The lease agreement was for 50 years, with the option of a renewal for 49 years, and will form a key part of the town's Lathlain Precinct Redevelopment project.

Although this proposed $60 million redevelopment would see two football ovals built—one to the exact size of the new Perth Stadium in Burswood, also in the electorate of Swan, and the other replicating the MCG—and a synthetic running track and indoor and outdoor training facilities, a crucial part of this project is its focus on developing community infrastructure and ensuring that all facilities can be used by the wider community and junior football leagues as well as schools in the local area. Such facilities will include a museum, a community hub, a cafe, barbecue areas, playgrounds and a walk trail and will also be the new base for the Wirrpanda Foundation, which will deliver community outreach programs locally.

This is an important milestone in my campaign to relocate the Eagles to Lathlain, but it is far from the last step. Currently the redevelopment proposal has secured $4.5 million from the AFL fund, and the Eagles have allocated $22 million of their own funds. The remaining funds, however, are in limbo, with the club trying to secure a commitment from the WA state government and also the federal government.

I again highlight, particularly for those members who are not Eagles supporters, that this funding commitment will not be for the sole benefit of the club. It will be a funding commitment for Swan residents and the wider Perth metropolitan community, who will all benefit from the delivery of the state-of-the-art community and recreational hub in the region. I look forward to continuing the work with the Eagles, the town of Victoria Park, the Swan community and my federal and state colleagues to ensure that this is exactly what is achieved. And—while I am on my feet, Mr Deputy Speaker Jones—I would like to add to the record my commiserations to the Townsville Cowboys.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): Thank you very much. In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

International Development Assistance

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (11:06): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) according to the United Nations, global extreme poverty has been halved since 1990 but more than 1.2 billion people remain in extreme poverty;
   (b) as an economically rich and developed nation, Australia has a responsibility to be a global leader in delivering overseas aid programs and funding;
   (c) in 2008, Christian Aid estimated that developing countries lost more than $160 billion (USD) through just two forms of multinational tax evasion—transfer mispricing and false invoicing; and
   (d) Micah Challenge:
      (i) is a global movement of aid and development agencies, churches, schools, groups and individuals speaking out against poverty and injustice in support of the Millennium Development Goals;
      (ii) has identified that Australia, as Chair of the G20, has a unique opportunity to bring tax evasion and corruption to the attention of the world in 2014; and
      (iii) urges Australia to take a leading role in tackling tax evasion;

(2) condemns the Government for:
   (a) cutting the overseas aid budget; and
   (b) its lack of action on multinational tax avoidance; and

(3) urges all Members of Parliament to take an active role in ensuring Australia continues to be a leader in the delivery of overseas aid programs and funding.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): Is there a seconder for the motion?

Ms Hall: I second the motion.

Ms CLAYDON: Poverty and extreme poverty in particular continue to be a major issue around the world. According to the United Nations, global extreme poverty—that is, people living on less than $1.25 per day—has halved since 1990, but more than 1.2 billion people remain in extreme poverty today. Ongoing conflict, political unrest, natural disasters and disease outbreaks across multiple continents are putting more and more pressure on already stretched economies, and millions of people have been displaced from their homes.

According to the UNHCR there are more than 52 million refugees and displaced persons worldwide. In Syria alone, more than three million people have been forced to abandon their homes and flee for their lives due to the ongoing conflict. A further 6.5 million are displaced within the country's borders.

In Africa, the World Health Organization have described the current Ebola epidemic as unparalleled in recent times, with more than 2,400 people already killed. They hope that the outbreak can be limited to tens of thousands rather than hundreds of thousands of people.

And, closer to home, thousands of typhoon survivors in the Philippines are still sheltered in tents and makeshift bunkhouses following the devastation of last November's Typhoon Haiyan.
While adding to global poverty, these singular and often catastrophic events are by no means the root cause of poverty in our world, and there are underlying issues that also need to be addressed. I would like to pay tribute to the progressive social networks like Micah Challenge that work tirelessly to ensure that our focus remains on these deeper underlying causes of global poverty.

Australia needs to strengthen its efforts in tackling poverty and injustice through the Millennium Development Goals, not renege on its once bipartisan commitment. The first action the government could take is to reinstate the $7.6 billion that they cut from the overseas aid budget.

Under Labor, overseas aid helped make a difference to the lives and health outcomes of millions of people in countries like Papua New Guinea, Afghanistan and Timor-Leste. Labor doubled Australia’s contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. And we near doubled Australia’s annual aid budget from $2.9 billion to $5.7 billion in six years of government, despite the tough budgetary environment, so as to maintain the commitment of the previous Howard government to continue to raise the aid budget to 0.5 per cent of GNI. This is a commitment that the now Prime Minister also made before being elected and promised to keep as late as December last year, I might add—a commitment that has now been abandoned.

I am proud to say that Novocastrians are very generous supporters of international development and make a substantial contribution both financially and with our time to nations not so well off as ours. More than 20,000 individuals, 500 local businesses and 55 community and church groups in Newcastle actively support international development. A number of these contributors joined the shadow minister for foreign affairs and international development and me last week in a public forum and raised concerns about the current state of Australia’s overseas aid budget. The message of the day was loud and clear: as an economically rich and developed nation, Australia has the responsibility to be a global leader in developing aid programs and funding.

I draw the House’s attention to the ongoing work of Micah Challenge, which this year shines a light on multinational tax dodging and corruption. In their words, the Shine the Light Initiative has been designed:
… to tackle the scourge of tax dodging which robs developing countries on a massive scale of vital revenue for poverty reduction and sustainable human development.

In 2008, it was estimated that more than $120 billion was lost to developing countries through just two forms of multinational tax evasion. That is more than these developing countries receive in aid. As chair of the G20 this year, Australia has a unique opportunity to influence world economic leaders in tackling this problem of multinational tax avoidance.

I welcome news over the weekend that the G20 members have agreed to implement the common reporting standard on financial account information over the next couple of years. The common reporting standard will mean that tax authorities will automatically exchange information about what individuals and companies have in their bank accounts, so that it becomes much harder to hide funds.

As the G20 chair, Australia should be out in front of the pack, ensuring that these measures are implemented in as timely a manner as possible back here in Australia. But I see that the
Treasurer has instead pushed our time frame back 12 months. I think dragging our heels in this regard is no good at all; the government needs to get the legislative processes— (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): The member's time has expired. Just to formalise it, Jill, can I ask that you second the motion and reserve your right to speak.

Ms Hall: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:12): I am pleased to rise on this motion put forward by the member for Newcastle, but I do have some issues with the wording of the motion. The member for Newcastle comes into this chamber and condemns the government for cutting the overseas aid budget. I am sure the member for Newcastle read the recent budget and has been following the debate in public over the last six years and that the member for Newcastle understands that this nation has currently run deficit budgets for the last six years and it will take at least three years until we can at least get that budget back into a balance. So that means that every year we are continuing to borrow more and more money. So if the member for Newcastle comes in and want to spend more money on foreign aid, a very noble cause, she should say where that money is coming from. Where is that money coming from? So you are going to raise taxes on other businesses? You are quite safe. We would like to hear where the money is coming from. Now we know where it came from for the last six years. We know where a lot of the foreign aid budget came from for the last six years: it was simply borrowed. So for the last six years we were actually borrowing money from overseas to give it back overseas. Even the former foreign affairs minister Bob Carr said you cannot run aid on borrowings. So if it is the proposal, which I seem to hear here from members on the other side, to raise company tax rates to pay more to fund their additional foreign investment—

Ms Claydon interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): The member was heard in silence.

Mr CRAIG KELLY: let them put that up. Let them put that up so every company knows, so everyone out there in the public knows, that your plan, if elected to government, is to raise the company tax rates so you can spend more on foreign aid.

I would like to give one example of how much of our foreign aid budget does not actually achieve what is intended. The previous government, over its last three years, gave $416 million to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Much of that money went into financing a bridge. There was $160 million to build a bridge. That is all very nice and that is all very well, but I think the taxpayers of Australia should be asking: why can't the Socialist Republic of Vietnam fund their own bridges? If the Australian taxpayer is doing it, that simply leaves the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to spend money on other things. Since we were so generous in giving them $416 million, that freed up funds for the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to buy 12 of the latest model Russian fighter jets last year for $460 million. We, the Australian taxpayer, may as well give the money to Putin's Russia to pay for those jets and let the Russians send those jets to the Vietnamese, because effectively that is what is happening. That is what is happening.

There is another point in the motion I would like to raise. The member for Newcastle talks about 'condemning the government for its lack of action on multinational tax avoidance'. They had six years in government. I would be very interested to hear what they did during their six
years in government. Absolutely squat! In contrast, we currently have our Treasurer up in Cairns for the G20, leading the world and leading the OECD nations in tackling that problem. So what we should be doing is changing this motion to say that we condemn the lack of action of the previous government and congratulate our federal Treasurer for taking steps and leading the way on multinational tax avoidance.

The other thing I would quickly like to add is on poverty. What we need to understand is that yes, it is correct that extreme global poverty has been halved since 1990. But we need to understand that it has not been aid that has led to that decline. What it has been is the adoption of free market principles.

Ms Hall: Ha!

Mr CRAIG KELLY: What a sad, sad response. The adoption of free markets and the encouragement of entrepreneurial activity: that is what lifts people out of poverty, not handouts. You combine free market principles, encouragement and reward for entrepreneurial activities and an abundant supply of low-cost electricity. That is what lifts people out of poverty. That is what our history shows and that is what we should be encouraging more and more of to make sure that we actually lift those people out of poverty. (Time expired)

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (11:17): I have to say that the first thing that the member for Hughes has demonstrated is that he has absolutely no idea about aid at all, absolutely no idea about poverty and absolutely no idea about what is happening in developing countries. I have to say that the member for Hughes stands condemned for standing up in this chamber and showing such contempt for developing countries and showing a total lack of knowledge of anything to do with aid and development. I do not know how a member of parliament can actually get to this place with such limited knowledge as we have seen from the member for Hughes.

The member for Hughes talks about budgets and deficits. Everything that a government chooses to do is about priorities. The government that he is part of has a priority of introducing a Paid Parental Leave scheme whilst at the same time cutting money from a budget to provide assistance to developing countries. Talking about the free market being responsible for the improvement in developing countries once again shows he has absolutely no idea what he is talking about. Has he looked at what has happened when companies like Nestle market baby formulas in countries where there is extreme poverty? Has he looked at the exploitations that have taken place in relation to the free market? It has made it easier to exploit people in developing nations. It has made it easier to increase the level of poverty and it has done absolutely nothing whatsoever to improve the situation.

I really do not know what Putin’s Russia and Vietnam have to do with this wonderful motion that the member for Newcastle has before us today, which is about the Millennium Development Goals and progress towards making poverty history. It is about improving public health in developing countries. It is a program that is about linking in to shine the light on tax dodging and corruption, using Australia’s position as chair of the G20. It is also about taking this opportunity to get rid of the scourge of tax dodging. Christian Aid has highlighted this, and since 2008 developing countries have lost more than US$160 billion through two forms of multinational corporate tax dodging: price transferring and false invoicing.
I am surprised by the member for Hughes's contribution, but I do not think that there are many members in this House that actually do not want to see extreme poverty and hunger eradicated throughout the world. I think that most members of this parliament want to see the Millennium Development Goals reached. I see that this is a way that we as a country can use our role to actually show leadership and to bring about some changes. I really feel that it has been a missed opportunity.

Oxfam called on the G20 ministers to rein in multinational tax cuts. The world's finance ministers need to crack down on avoidance is what Oxfam says. Oxfam's Helen Szoke said that the international tax regime was 'broken' and needed fixing. Reports from the weekend's G20 actually show that we have failed. We have failed. We have not stepped up to the mark. We have made minimal changes. We have given lip-service to multinational tax evasion. We are actually leading to its entrenchment.

I have to finish by saying this government's contribution to multinational tax evasion has been to open loopholes. We closed them; this government is opening them. It stands condemned for that. We want to see poverty eliminated worldwide.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:22): I have spoken about foreign aid many times in this place, highlighting that instead of foreign aid being judged by merely the number of dollars spent, the key indicator of a project's success should be what is actually achieved on the ground. That is exactly what Minister Julie Bishop's new aid paradigm achieves.

While there is no way of waving a magic wand and suddenly making all foreign aid more efficient and effective, there are a number of ways aid recipients, donors, workers, governments and the private sector can work together to improve the efficiency of our system. The cost of aid delivery on occasions appears to outweigh the aid itself, and in quite properly trying to protect the integrity of our aid system we all too often burden ourselves with the bureaucracy and inflexibility that can overwhelm the good intentions.

There are a number of effective partnership relationships to improve aid delivery ranging from public-private partnerships to the whole question of social entrepreneurship. At least 80 per cent of today's assistance comes from non-public sources, up 30 per cent from 40 years ago, according to USAID. It is estimated that from an initial investment of $2.1 billion in public funds, USAID was able to leverage an additional $5.8 billion in private funds and contributions.

From my discussions with Abt JTA, a private aid consulting firm doing some great work in Papua New Guinea, they believe that leverage is crucial. There has been little effort in the past to use the aid program to leverage funds from others and develop collaborative partnerships. However, there is considerable potential to do so. William Easterly, a professor of economics at NYU, believes that is it is important—especially for Western nations—to identify that development happens mainly through home-grown efforts. Easterly believes that the developed nations provide foreign aid and development programs through the lens of Western culture with a focus on significant bureaucracy and set approaches that do not involve the people whom the services are supposed to benefit.

While I was in Papua New Guinea at the end of last year with the Australian Defence Force, I was inspired to some extent by a discussion with Sir Peter Barter and Father Jan Czuba, the President of Divine Word University, about the benefits of institution-to-
institution support as an effective method of aid delivery. Father Jan has focused programs within the university to be primarily health and education based so that PNG graduates contribute back to the community in areas that are needed the most. The PNG LNG Project, a joint venture between ExxonMobil and Oil Search, has developed an efficient community health impact management program, which is a leading example of a privately funded aid program.

Significant improvements in facilities' healthcare delivery have occurred in the PNG LNG Project villages. There are many avenues the Australian government can take to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our foreign aid and, at the end of the day, value for our taxpayer dollars. The coalition understands that our aid effort should be focused firmly within our region, where Australia's interests lie. The foreign minister has also announced some performance targets for the revised program, which are: reducing poverty—by July 2015, all country and regional programs will have aid investment plans that describe how Australia's aid will promote economic growth in ways that provide pathways out of poverty; focusing on the Indonesia-Pacific region, increasing the proportion of country program aid that is spent in the Indo-Pacific region to at least 90 per cent from 2014-15; and empowering women and girls—more than 80 per cent of investments regardless of their objectives will effectively address gender issues in their implementation.

I would also like to point out that, while those opposite like to stand and complain that Australia is not spending enough on aid, we are now achieving greater aid results for every dollar spent under the coalition's paradigm than under Labor's reckless money-throwing approach. Even Bob Carr acknowledged that a nation cannot have an unsustainable aid budget. The member for Sydney committed Labor to spend an extra $16 billion on the aid program yet has not revealed where this additional $16 billion will come from. Labor even raided $30 million from the emergency fund for its blow-out on border protection costs. Yes, Labor was its own third largest recipient of foreign aid budget. Fortunately, the coalition has now restored this money. This shows how careless and irresponsible Labor is with Australia's foreign aid. Only the coalition can be trusted to deliver foreign aid responsibly and in a way that will see the best outcomes for each dollar spent.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (11:27): There are a number of aspects of this particular resolution. One of them is the foreign aid budget. In relation to the wild outburst by the member for Hughes, where he used the phrase 'the Socialist Republic of Vietnam' five times to in some way disparage foreign aid to Vietnam, he has not been on the forefront of insisting that this very government he is part of not have a foreign aid program in Vietnam. This kind of attempt to in some way insinuate that it is money misspent, and only by the previous government, is absolutely preposterous.

On the foreign aid budget; everyone knows the argument that there have been budget deficits. Let us put to one side parental care and other issues. Even if you have a deficit, you have to make decisions. I think Bob Geldof put it very well in The Guardian during his recent visit to Australia. He said:

You are one of the richest countries in the world ... You can’t mess with your sovereign promise to the poor, they’re too vulnerable, they’re too weak.

Similarly, another person with a bit more expertise than the member for Hughes, Professor Damien Kingsbury; the Director of the Centre for Citizenship, Development and Human
Rights at Deakin University, on 14 May in Crikey spoke of 'savage aid cuts'. He spoke of the current provisions 'ignoring' Millennium Development Goals, and he said that the earlier commitment to lift aid to 0.5 per cent of GNI by 2017-18 'now appears entirely gone'. Karen Barlow, on ABC radio straight after the budget, could speak of 'the biggest savings measure of the budget' and spoke of a fundamental reshaping of foreign aid. We can come about the question of the deficit, but decisions have to be made by government as to how they do it. Quite clearly, the main target was foreign aid.

We come here and hear arguments that, supposedly, the previous speaker has got some 'scientific analysis' which is only known to her and that she is already able to demonstrate that supposedly every foreign aid dollar now being spent is far more effective than those spent for the last 20 years. As to where she gets that evidence from, I doubt there is any source. On 18 July, the Prime Minister, in response to correspondence from me, wrote saying: It is vital that we help developing countries capture revenue on profits earned in their jurisdiction so they can establish and protect their tax bases. Australia is using its leadership in the G20 to ensure developing countries can participate in and benefit from the reforms.

They are noble sentiments and I would hope that there is some action. However, one has to see this in the context of a government which closed loopholes for international tax evasion. It was a major measure. They actually reduced the loopholes. So to come out here now and say that we are going to be in the forefront is quite questionable.

I also note that the Treasurer has been shouting from the rooftops that, with regard to the question of exchanging financial information, we are supposedly going to be at the forefront of a move towards an international reporting standard that is common. However, the early adopter group of nations, including the major G20 powers such as the United Kingdom, Argentina, France, Germany, India and Italy, have a timetable far in advance of Australia.

The other question here is a question of global poverty. Obviously, there is some comfort to be had from advice that says that 21 per cent of people in the developing world live on $1.25 a day compared with 43 per cent in 1990 and 52 per cent in 1981. I do not doubt that there have been advances, but I notice an article in the latest edition of the New York Review by Ian Johnson called 'The Chinese Invade Africa'. He noted that whilst there is a significant number of people in Africa now described as middle class—300 million Africans spend $2 to $20 a day and they are supposedly middle class—he noted that 60 per cent of those people are in the $2 to $4 category. Indisputably, there is a large challenge ahead of us.

I want to say that Ban Ki-moon, amongst others, has certainly hit the nail on the head with his comment:

We all know the heavy toll taken by corruption. More than a trillion dollars stolen or lost, every year—money badly needed for the Millennium Development Goals.

However, we cannot totally blame African leaders for, quite frankly, the rampant tax evasion. In recent weeks there has been a big focus on Amazon and Google: they are basically operating in countries, doing offshore operations and then claiming it has got nothing to do with the entity on the mainland. There are figures produced that developing countries only take 13 per cent of GDP and taxes compared to rich countries taking an average of 34 per cent; a discrepancy mainly due to tax evasion.
We now have a situation where there is talk of long overdue of international— *(Time expired)*

Debate adjourned.

**BILLS**

**Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australia Fund Bill 2014**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed on the motion: That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr RUDDOCK *(Berowra—Chief Government Whip)* *(11:32)*: I rise to speak on the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australia Fund Bill 2014 proposed joint committee on the Australia Fund. It is a bill, interestingly, to establish a joint committee and it is to look at this question as to whether an Australia Fund would be useful. I think the origins of it are well known: the member for Fairfax, as leader of the Palmer United Party, asked us to look at the concept of this. The terms of reference are quite wide, but I think one can understand why a motion of this type is being moved: from time to time Queensland in particular has been affected by drought and floods, which we are all very familiar with, and the manner in which we deal with these issues has always required government assistance in one form or another to deal with the very significant disadvantage that people are sometimes afflicted with as a result of national emergencies of that type.

The question is: how should you look after people's needs? How might you respond to them? It is being suggested that we should have a committee to inquire into the need for a rural and manufacturing industries fund to deal with crises and natural disasters and to look at matters relating to emergency or ongoing financial relief. It would look at loans—whether guarantors might be necessary to purchase all or part of an existing loan, whether to waive interest or to capitalise it, whether to assume control of a business for a particular period, whether to grant funds to an appropriate industry body and whether to grant funds to a business for the purposes of purchasing new technology to make it more economically viable—and also look at bankruptcy and insolvency laws and how they might impact.

Let me make it very clear. This is an inquiry to look into issues that we all regard as important and that governments have over a long period of time responded to. It is really a question of whether there are better ways of undertaking that task.

Committees provide an opportunity for organisations and individuals to put views to us and to have those matters dealt with on the public record. Parliament's committee system has significantly strengthened our parliamentary arrangements here in Australia for dealing with these sorts of issues. The make-up of this particular committee will include a balance of government and non-government members and senators, and obviously any position that might be adopted would require cross-party support. Having a committee with broad representation is likely to ensure that we get a thorough investigation, particularly as to whether there is a need for a fund. Such a committee would be able to undertake inquiries around Australia, not just in Queensland but where natural disasters occur frequently. And, of course, we will treat with respect the committee's views, just as we do with all other committees.
In the end, the response will be a matter for government. Nobody knows where an inquiry of this sort might lead, but I am sure all of those who sit on the committee will bring their conscientious efforts to produce an outcome that is worthy of consideration. I would simply note that, in terms of some of the media commentary around industry subsidies and handouts, the government has expressed some views and the Treasurer had something to say. I think it is useful to quote because it may help to inform the committee and the way in which they look at this issue. He says the government believes that 'industry, being in the business of relying on its own enterprise, should not become reliant on taxpayer support, because ultimately industry assistance is revenue from another person'. I think the Treasurer was making it clear that the government does not necessarily support the creation of a new government owned industry assistance bank. The members who are giving consideration to this matter ought to have, I think, some regard to those thoughts.

The issues raised in the terms of reference are challenging, and I am sure there will be a wide range of submissions put. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that we cannot predetermine the outcome of an inquiry of any committee, but the government will await the recommendations of the report and will obviously give proper consideration to the matters that the committee raises.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (11:38): It is clear from the contribution from the member for Berowra that the government supports this legislation, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australia Fund Bill 2014, which sets up a committee, but is not necessarily committing to the establishment of an Australia Fund. It seems to me that what the government is really doing is playing along with the Palmer United Party's proposition that they want to set up a committee to do this but at the end of the day reserving its judgement on it. I believe that that is simply a political move on the part of the government and a tactical move to stall and delay any decision on this matter. But it also raises the question of just what deals have been made between the government and the Palmer United Party with respect to this whole issue, because it is clear from comments that the Treasurer has already made and comments that the Prime Minister has made that at no stage in the past was this government going to look at providing any form of direct assistance to industries, farmers and the like, but suddenly it has changed its view and is now prepared to consider what options are available. Why would a government change its view and consider what options are available were it not for perhaps having done deals with the Palmer United Party?

Again, that is a matter that goes to another statement made by the Prime Minister before the election that this is a Prime Minister and a government that will not make deals with Independents and minor parties but instead will lead as a government and govern as a government. So much for that commitment made to the Australian people before the election. It is clear that once you are in government all bets are off, all promises are in the past, and we now face a new landscape. It really highlights the hypocrisy of the government that it was prepared to say one thing before the election and another after.

But it is even more concerning because this proposition effectively flags giving hope to industries and farmers that are perhaps struggling right now and need some form of government assistance. By setting up a committee to look at what is available, it gives them some hope. The reality is that, by the time the committee is set up, carries out its inquiry, prepares its report and brings it back to parliament, and then the government responds to that
report, we will be into the next election. It means that these people will not be able to get any form of assistance whatsoever.

What is even more concerning about that is that the member for Fairfax, in his address in support of his own bill, strongly made the point that one of the issues of concern to the farmers and industries that need assistance is the delay that they are experiencing as a result of government processes. So here they are being critical of government processes but then setting up another process which does exactly the same—it causes delay, it causes uncertainty. I suspect that, by the time this matter is resolved by the government, anyone who needs assistance right now will have moved on; it will be well and truly too late.

This is a government that has made it clear that it is not interested in manufacturing in this country. It has already turned its back on the manufacturing sector. We saw it very clearly with respect to car makers in this country, we saw it with respect to SPC Ardmona workers and we have seen it with respect to numerous other industries that hang off those sectors, both in the food area and in the direct manufacturing area. We are now also seeing it with respect to the construction of naval ships here in this country. This is a government that is not prepared to lend one iota of support to manufacturing, yet it pretends, by saying it is prepared to look at a proposition put forward by the Palmer United Party, that it might do so. The government simultaneously says that it cares about farmers in Queensland, yet we know that it is very, very slow in delivering the kind of assistance that they already need and that is available through drought relief schemes and the like. It is just dragging its heels in respect to providing the support that it could provide.

There are mechanisms available and already in place if the government wants to support both industry and farmers. There are funds available and already in place. Although the government has cut almost half a billion dollars of funding to manufacturing and industry generally, there are still funds available. Let us look at the processes that are available, improve those if we need to and stop wasting time with what is nothing more than a delaying proposition by the Abbott government.

Debate adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Greste, Mr Peter

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (11:43): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) that Peter Greste has had a distinguished career as a journalist with CNN, Reuters, WTN, BBC and Al Jazeera;

(b) the long pre-trial incarceration, refusal of bail, procedural errors, extraordinary allegations, and acknowledged extremely severe sentences; and

(c) widespread international condemnation of the process, characterised by United States Secretary of State John Kerry's comment that it was 'a chilling and draconian sentence'; and

(2) calls on the Government to continue pressing Egyptian authorities for justice and raising these human rights issues in all viable international fora.
At the outset, I thank the member for Macmillan for initiating this motion. He approached me about this and asked if I could frame some words. We also had some discussions with legal representatives for Peter Greste to make sure that we did not go against his interests.

As I indicated in a previous contribution in relation to this matter, Peter Greste is a world-renowned journalist. He has worked on four continents and in 2011 received a Peabody Award. That is an important ingredient of this reality: this person is internationally recognised, he is reputable, he is renowned for his work. In that context it is preposterous to say, as Egyptian authorities have, that because he works for Al Jazeera, which is based in Qatar, and because of Qatar's association with the Muslim Brotherhood, in some convoluted, irresponsible fashion, this supposedly indicates that he is supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood. He was arrested on 29 December last and commented on 26 January, the next month, 'I have no desire to weaken Egypt nor in any way see it struggle…Our arrest doesn't seem to be about our work at all. It seems to be about staking out what the government here considers to be normal and acceptable.'

Obviously the seeming public reality is that because they engaged with the Muslim Brotherhood, because they gave them an opportunity to put their views, because they sought their interpretation of events—and they are somewhat controversial, quite frankly, in Egypt. I recall going to rallies against the previous Morsi government's measures against the Coptic minority on a number of occasions and I deplored its actions. There is some controversy about what occurred in regard to Morsi's replacement by a military led regime, so it is legitimate for reporters to go out there and ask for alternative points of view.

On 29 January Egypt indicated that it would prosecute 20 Al Jazeera journalists, including Greste. Typical of world reaction was the comment of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on 1 February, 'We urge the Egyptian authorities to promptly release all journalists imprisoned for carrying out legitimate news reporting activities in exercise of their fundamental human rights.' There are grave questions about the way this whole case has been conducted. There was a 22-minute report on the arrest and interrogation with sci-fi film music in the background. There was the question of photoshopped pictures of Greste with high ranking Egyptian government officials, images of cars on a bridge and a documentary produced by Greste on a very controversial issue—soccer!

The conviction was widely condemned by Western media and governments. Deakin University lecturer on Middle Eastern studies, Mat Hardy, said that the reality was that there would be only be one outcome: 'Once the case started moving it didn't matter what evidence was presented.' British Foreign Secretary, William Hague, said, 'Egypt should review unacceptable sentences against Egyptian and international journalists and show commitment to freedom of the press.' Similarly, the Secretary of State in the United States, John Kerry, said, 'The conviction and chilling, draconian sentences by the Cairo Criminal Court of three Al Jazeera journalists…lacked many fundamental norms of due process, is a deeply disturbing setback to Egypt's transition.'

The wide-ranging allegations remind me somewhat of a book I am reading at the moment—Jacek Hugo-Bader's book *Kolyma Diaries: A Journey into Russia's Haunted Hinterland*. In that there is a person who was sentenced to 20 years jail under article 58 of the Soviet measures because he, as a student leader, was approached by other students to look at a program they had, a political program. He was then jailed for 20 years under three
provisions—terrorism, group activity and anti-Soviet agitation. I am afraid that some of the allegations against Greste and co. would seem to be those wide-ranging comments.

I am pleased that on 10 September the Egyptian Ambassador to Australia, Dr Hassan El-Laithy, commented, 'I hope when the procedures come to an end, in the courts, everything will be cleared, that's what I really hope for, I hope that he will be reunited with his family, sooner rather than later. And I assure you that this is the real position—we hope to see him back home.'

I think the Australian parliament, regardless of political views, regardless of the level of activity on human rights, regardless of members' interests in international matters, is united in the need for this to happen. We are also somewhat reassured by comments on 7 July by the President of Egypt saying, 'I wished they were deported right after they were arrested instead of getting put on trial.' So between the lines there is some hope. I am pleased to join with the member for McMillan and others today in calling for Australia to raise this matter in every international fora possible.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall): Is the motion seconded?

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:48): I am happy to second the motion, Mr Deputy Speaker. I rise to speak on this motion today with a heavy heart. On the day of Peter Greste's sentencing, 23 June, I introduced a motion to this place commending the government for their continued representations on his behalf. I acknowledge that my colleagues from all sides joined with me in the hope of a just and proper outcome; however, this was not the case. Unfortunately, on this occasion justice was denied. Being a journalist is not a crime; telling the truth is not terrorism. I spoke with Peter's parents, Lois and Juris, following the sentencing and they assured me that they and Pete were not giving up and that they would appeal and make every possible effort. The Australian government has not given up either and continues to take up opportunities to raise this case with the Egyptian government and authorities.

As a result of the large number of official representations already made on Peter's case since December 2013, the government is confident that Egyptian authorities are fully aware of the importance of this case. The foreign minister has assured me that the Australian Embassy in Cairo will continue to provide consular assistance to Peter, and this includes regular visits. Unfortunately, Peter Greste's case must exhaust all legal processes before a pardon or presidential clemency can even be raised.

There have been a number of instances where our government has made representations to the Egyptian authorities, and the government has made it clear that it supports an expedited appeal process so that this case can be finally resolved and so that Peter can be allowed to return home to his family. From Prime Minister Tony Abbott, Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop and Attorney-General Senator Brandis to senior bureaucrats, including Australia's Ambassador to Egypt, Dr Ralph King, all have continued to make representations at the highest levels on behalf of Peter Greste. Obviously not all the behind-the-scenes works are for public discussion. Prime Minister Abbott spoke by telephone to the then interim President Mansour on 27 March, expressed his appreciation for the President's letter to Mr Greste's parents and sought assistance from the President to bring about an early resolution of the case and Mr Greste's release.
The case of Peter Greste is incredibly concerning. A free press is in every person's and every country's interests. As Prime Minister Tony Abbott stated:

A free press will help every country, including Egypt, to be better in the months and years ahead and obviously a free press is not compatible with harassing journalists going about their ordinary business.

The trial of Peter Greste has also received notable international reactions. In January the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, said:

We have consistently expressed our serious concern about the limits on freedom of peaceful assembly and expression in Egypt … The United States again urges all sides to condemn and prevent violence and to move towards an inclusive political process based on the rule of law and respect for the fundamental freedoms of all Egyptians.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has also called for the release of Mr Greste. A spokesperson for the high commissioner said that the arrest was based on 'vague charges', was of great concern and had increased fears among the general media. In a White House press briefing in February, spokesman Jay Carney said that the tension was 'of deep concern' to the administration: 'We have strongly urged the Egyptian government to drop these charges.'

With the ongoing appeal process, I think I can speak for all Australians when I say we are hopeful for a positive outcome, and our hearts go out to Lois and Juris and their family during this tough time.

Journalism is an honourable profession. We rely on the integrity of journalists as a primary source of our information—information upon which we base judgements and decisions. We rely on the courage of journalists who report from troubled places, who place their lives at risk to report the facts. Peter Greste is a journalist of integrity, a journalist of courage. He is a constant reminder of the importance of freedom of speech, particularly in the Middle East. I am honoured to stand today beside my colleagues from all sides of politics to demonstrate our united and unwavering support for Peter and his colleagues. I look forward to the day when we can welcome Peter Greste to this place and thank him for his courage and integrity. I commend the motion to the House.

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (11:53): I rise to support the important motion moved by the member for Werriwa and commend him for moving it. In most democracies the media and the judiciary are two parts of a single story. The best of these institutions are motivated by the same objective: the pursuit of truth in the interests of all the people. Nations function best when the press and the justice system serve to strengthen not weaken each other. But when these institutions fail, and if they are pitted against each other, if one or other is compromised, freedom and justice are threatened and contaminated. It is real, honest, innocent people who can be the victims. So it was in the appalling and heart-wrenching case of Peter Greste in Egypt this year.

As the member for Werriwa mentioned, Peter is a distinguished journalist with more than 25 years of experience working for an array of high-quality agencies, including Reuters, CNN, WTN, BBC and Al Jazeera. His experience in the industry is extensive and diverse, having worked for bureaus in London, Bosnia, South Africa, Chile, Mexico, Belarus, Afghanistan, Kenya, Somalia and most recently, of course, in Egypt. It was in this last location that Peter became a news story himself, as the injustice and unfairness that he suffered at the hands of the Egyptian judicial system was disseminated around the world.
Accused and convicted of spreading false news and conspiring against certain powerful groups in Egypt, he was shamefully sentenced in June this year to seven years in prison just for doing his job as a journalist. What is more, the process that led to his arrest and conviction, along with that of his two other colleagues from Al Jazeera, was fraught with procedural irregularities and extraordinary breaches of the principles that underlie any just and reasonable system of law. Throughout this whole process, the government and the opposition here in Australia have been united in condemnation of the miscarriage of justice that is the Peter Greste case. At what must be an awful time for his family, for his parents and for his brothers, Mike and Andrew, who live here in Australia, our hearts go out to them. We have no alternative but to maintain hope that the appeal lodged in August will be successful and that Peter will be granted freedom.

We all heard the words of Egypt's envoy to Australia that Peter will be back home in Brisbane sooner rather than later, and many of us were encouraged by them, although we have learned over the past few months not to get our hopes up. Our message to the Greste family must be that the Australian parliament will stand with them for as long as it takes to free their beloved son and brother. Peter Greste's brother Andrew wrote an article recently in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He described how, throughout most of his professional career, the idea of constitutionally enshrined press freedom was just an abstract principle. It is an important principle but it is not an abstract one. It needs to be protected and advanced. It needs constant attention.

In many countries, freelance journalists and foreign correspondents risk their lives every day to maintain our awareness of the situations unfolding throughout the world. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, we have seen 36 journalists killed on the job around the world this year. We have seen the shocking and deplorable public executions of Steven Sotloff and James Foley in Syria that haunted televisions around the world. And there have been less-well-publicised but equally devastating murders in Iraq, Israel, Ukraine, Pakistan, Brazil, Mexico and Africa. Each and every death, and each and every journalist who lives in fear of harm or detention, is a tragedy for the profession and a tragedy for all of us who depend on their work for information and for knowledge.

The Labor Party believes fundamentally in the freedom of journalists to be able to do their work, as does, I think, every member in this place—and I commend the member for Ryan for her remarks a moment ago. We will continue to stand beside Peter and his family, and all the journalists who risk their lives in the course of their important work. They should never be imprisoned or harmed for doing their job and for reporting the news. That is why this is an important motion moved by the member for Werriwa, and that is why I am proud to support it.

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (11:58): I would also like to acknowledge the member for Werriwa and thank him for bringing this important motion to the parliament. I rise to speak in support of this motion. Peter Greste has a distinguished career with a number of media organisations working right across the world. His plight first came to my attention in December when his brother Andrew, who is a constituent of mine and is a farmer out near Wee Waa, sent me an email outlining the situation that his brother Peter was in. At that time, I contacted the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop. I understand that, in a myriad of ways, Australia has been endeavouring to help Peter Greste return home.
Peter Greste graduated in journalism from the University of Queensland. He has worked everywhere from regional Victoria to Afghanistan. The respect that his colleagues have shown for him throughout the trial has been an accurate indication of the regard in which he is held. Mr Greste is no stranger to tragedy, and indeed in 2005 he witnessed his producer, Kate Peyton, being killed by being shot in the back outside their hotel in the Somali capital of Mogadishu. In reflection on her death, he said:

We were working together on the story, just the two of us, and we both knew what we were getting into. It was a risk we both judged to be worth taking, if only because so few reporters have been into Somalia in the past decade, and nobody can hope to make a considered judgment of either Africa or Islamic extremism without understanding why that country has remained so anarchic.

Peter had only been in Egypt for two weeks when he was arrested in his hotel room. Since his arrest his legal team have announced to the public that they have lodged an appeal against his conviction. At the moment we do not have any clear idea about the timeline for this appeal process. This is obviously distressing not only for Peter Greste but for his entire family. Mr Greste is receiving regular visits from consular officials in Cairo and we will continue to provide support to Mr Greste. Mr Greste's parents, who have been based in Cairo since late June, have also been able to visit Peter and I would like to also comment on the great courage and dignity that Mr and Mrs Greste have shown through this incredible ordeal.

The Australian government has, at every opportunity, expressed concern about the way in which this case has unfolded. Representations have been made to the relevant Egyptian authorities throughout Mr Greste's trial, including by the foreign minister and the Prime Minister. As the Prime Minister has said, these journalists were just doing their job. We do have to acknowledge that Mr Greste is subject to the Egyptian justice system, however frustrating that may be. The Prime Minister has publicly stated his commitment to taking all reasonable action to ensure Peter Greste and his colleagues are released as quickly as possible. The Australian government has been clear: we respect the outcome of the recent elections in Egypt, but Mr Greste's trial highlights the concern that we have about Egypt's commitment to the transition to democracy.

Inherent to any good democracy is a free press. These sentiments have been echoed by leaders around the world including US Secretary of State John Kerry and United Kingdom Prime Minister David Cameron, as well as representatives of the highest level from New Zealand, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also issued a statement about their deep concern at the court decision of 24 June. In the statement, Secretary-General Ban described the trial as having proceedings that clearly appear not to meet the basic fair trial standards. It is clear that the Egyptian authorities are completely aware that the Australian government is seeking Mr Greste's release in order for him to return to his family as quickly as possible. We support an expeditious appeal process and we will continue to work with Mr Greste and his family throughout this process. I acknowledge the great courage that Peter Greste has shown through this horrendous ordeal and my sincere hope is that he returns to Australia sooner rather than later.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (12:03): I rise to support this important resolution moved by the member for Werriwa—important because it is an opportunity for us to show as a parliament our absolute unity in support of Peter Greste's release and our support for freedom of the press. Peter Greste, of course, has been detained in Egypt since December of last year.
Peter was charged with defaming Egypt and having ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. In June of this year he was convicted of these charges and sentenced to seven years in jail. Peter is detained with his colleagues Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed, who have also been convicted of defaming Egypt and having ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. Baher Mohamed was also sentenced to an additional three years in prison for possession of ammunition. This referred to a spent bullet casing he found on the ground during a protest in those tumultuous times in Egypt.

Freedom of the press is something that we take for granted here in Australia. Our governments do not always like what they read in newspapers, nor do we as parliamentarians. But we accept that openness is a part of our democracy. I welcome the idea that Egypt has gone down the path of democracy with an independent judiciary. But, when a journalist simply going about his duties finds himself breaking the law, it is very clear that Egypt has much more work to do to adopt all of the institutions that are essential to democracy. I find it unfortunate that the Egyptian government cites one of these institutions, the independence of the judiciary, to justify its failure to protect another: the freedom of the press.

There is no doubt that the work of journalists, particularly in the zones that Peter Greste worked in, is challenging and takes great courage. It is courage based upon the principle that people have a right to know what is going on in the world. Every day journalists place their own safety behind the principle of getting access to information and informing the citizenry of what is occurring. Around the world, many journalists—too many journalists—are killed each year or imprisoned for simply doing their job. The Peter Greste case brings home to Australia that this is the case.

It is a fact that, as Thomas Jefferson said, you cannot limit freedom of the press without destroying it. What we have here is a case where that freedom of the press is being restricted. The press are being intimidated by the fact that not just Peter Greste but also his colleagues from Al Jazeera have gone through what has been described as a farcical trial. The Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance report that according to the International Federation of Journalists 88 journalists and media workers have been killed so far this year. That is an extraordinary figure! It is an extraordinary figure which shows the danger that people put themselves in.

Peter Greste is someone who left Australia in the 1990s to pursue his dream of becoming a foreign correspondent. He worked for the BBC and Reuters, where he covered Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. In 2011 he started with Al Jazeera and, in that year, he also won a prestigious Peabody Award for a BBC report on Somalia.

One of the lawyers for the Al Jazeera journalists concluded their final argument by saying: This is not a trial for these defendants alone—this is a trial of all journalists. Our entire parliament stands, as well as with Peter Greste, with the Greste family, who have shown such courage. On behalf of the opposition, we give every support to the government in its endeavours to ensure Peter Greste's early release.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (12:08): I rise to add my voice to those of my parliamentary colleagues who have today shared their concern and frustration that Australian journalist Peter Greste remains behind bars in Egypt's Tora prison. I heartily welcome this opportunity to ensure Australia and the international community do not stop fighting for Mr
Greste's freedom. As we have heard, Mr Greste was erroneously found guilty of spreading false news and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood. He was sentenced to seven years in jail. As a former television journalist myself for many years, I was shocked by both the conviction and the severity of the sentence. This shock has resonated with journalists and foreign correspondents around the world. To describe this finding as unjust is a monumental understatement.

Peter Greste is a man who was simply doing his job: reporting the facts with integrity and with balance, without fear or favour. He was also, and is, a journalist of great distinction and courage. His track record speaks for itself. Mr Greste was not pushing any agenda other than that of a reporter seeking to report the truth.

In 1991, Mr Greste first left Australia to pursue his dreams of becoming a foreign correspondent. He had a long and notable career reporting from conflict zones, shining a light on some of the most disturbing aspects of humanity. He spent time working across Africa, the Middle East and South America for media outlets including CNN, Reuters, BBC and Al Jazeera. Notably, he reported from Kabul on the emergence of the Taliban. He returned to report from Afghanistan after 9/11. Mr Greste has also spent time in places including Bosnia, Mexico, Chile, Kenya and Tanzania. He moved to Mombasa on Kenya's Indian Ocean coast in 2004, where he became a freelancer.

In 2011, as we have heard, he won a prestigious Peabody Award for his documentary *Somalia: Land of Anarchy*. Six years earlier, his producer, Kate Peyton, was shot dead while they were reporting from Somalia's capital, Mogadishu. It shows the absolute courage and determination of the man that he would return to the scene of such a horrendous incident to complete the report they had been working on together. Peter Greste said later of Ms Peyton's death:

I was with her when she was shot. We were working together on the story, just the two of us, and we both knew what we were getting into. It was a risk we both judged to be worth taking, if only because so few reporters have been into Somalia in the past decade, and nobody can hope to make a considered judgement of either Africa or Islamic extremism without understanding why that country has remained so anarchic. So when I am asked who cares what happens at a dusty, poverty-stricken, anarchic backwater on a corner of Africa, the answer is as simple as it is obvious: Kate Peyton cared.

Peter Greste laid bare the confronting truths about Somalia for the world to see, as he did in Egypt. Today I call on the Egyptian authorities to do the right thing and to release Mr Greste and his colleagues immediately. As we have heard, he was jailed along with Al Jazeera colleagues Mohamed Fadel Fahmy and Baher Mohamed.

Our government will continue to take all opportunities to raise this case with the Egyptian government. The government has made clear that it supports an expeditious appeal process, so that this case can be finally resolved and Mr Greste allowed to return home to his family. The Australian embassy in Cairo will continue to provide consular assistance to Mr Greste, including visiting him on regular occasions. I commend foreign affairs minister, Julie Bishop, and Prime Minister Tony Abbott for the way they have handled this terrible situation. They, along with other Australian authorities and officials, have been making numerous representations to the Egyptian authorities.

We must now wait for the appeal to come before the court. We—of course, all parliamentarians here in Australia—are incredibly hopeful of a more favourable outcome.
Egypt must realise that a free press is a crucial element to a democracy. I urge the court to make the right decision and send Mr Greste home to his family.

Debate adjourned.

**Small Business**

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (12:13): I move:

That the House:

(1) acknowledges small business as a major driver of economic growth in Australia;

(2) notes that:

(a) small businesses are time and resource poor and face significant obstacles in securing government contracts;

(b) the Government has allocated $2.8 million over four years to assist small business to access the Commonwealth procurement market;

(c) the establishment of a new unit providing specialist advice on contracts will ensure small businesses are not disadvantaged when dealing with the Commonwealth; and

(d) under Labor, 519,000 jobs were lost in small business;

(3) commends the government for removing the regulatory imposts that apply to more than 20,000 annual tender processes for Commonwealth agency work; and

(4) recognises the benefits that will be achieved for small business in being able to competitively compete for Commonwealth tenders.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr Sukkar: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr WILLIAMS: Small business is the heartbeat of the economy. That is a phrase that gets bandied about a fair bit, but it is so true and we will say more about that today. My first real contact with small business came when I helped my mother in her shop in country South Australia as a young boy. As with many small businesses, this is a family business where the family members pitch in, and it is in a tight-knit community where everyone makes a significant contribution to the local business. I earned some pocket money along the way, which was always useful. My wife also is a small business owner, so I hear daily of the challenges that she faces in her business, with increasing costs and pressures and also those of other businesses around her workplace.

The coalition, however, has a strong record of working with small businesses, and members of the coalition know from our time in business—because we understand business and we can relate to small business—how to help small business. The small businesses out there and the employees of the small businesses know we are on their side. Over the last few years, I have talked to thousands of small business owners and workers about the challenges they face, and we are committed to making life better for them all. Unlike members opposite, we are not for big government; we are for effective government. I know these are the words that members opposite do not like to hear, but efficiency, productivity and results is where small businesses are focused and what they want out of their workplaces.

I would like to make a few comments about my home state of South Australia before I get onto the government's small business policy agenda. South Australia, unfortunately, is one of the highest business taxing states in Australia. These are not my words; these are the words of...
our local business chamber, Business SA, the self-proclaimed voice of business in South Australia, so they obviously know what they are talking about. We have seen business closures and job losses, and not just in South Australia; small businesses around Australia are haemorrhaging.

It is no surprise that they are finding life tougher after Labor introduced tax after tax, whether it was the carbon tax or the mining tax. At state level, the emergency services levy has increased, which is causing some grief for small businesses as well. There are reports in some areas of a significant amount of their bills going up, placing more pressures on them. In my electorate we have businesses that have said the carbon tax is contributing to the increase in their utility bills by around $14,000 for one business and over $40,000 for another. This is why it is so important that we have acted like we have to remove the carbon tax and other taxes.

On the positive side, there are some business-friendly policies that we have started implementing in addition to those that I have mentioned, and I will touch on them later. We have also seen some positive employment trends, with over 100,000 jobs being created in Australia, and this is as a result, in part, of our business-friendly policies. Our challenge now is to continue to find ways to help businesses grow and hire new people, and to reduce their burden of regulation and their cost structure. In my electorate of Hindmarsh, I am working with local councils to help businesses in my area, whether that be through tourism projects or the $155 million from the government's Growth Fund to help innovative manufacturing companies invest in new capital equipment.

At the national level, our broad agenda is encouraging entrepreneurial behaviour, productivity and competitiveness. I will just run through a few points in this respect. In terms of tourism, which for my electorate is so important with its cafes, restaurants and the airport, we have $43.1 million over four years to implement the new Tourism Demand-Driven Infrastructure Program. In terms of entrepreneurs, we have close to $500 million over four years to establish the new Entrepreneurs' Infrastructure Program. Having dealt with entrepreneurs over many years, I know how important they are as an ecosystem of Australia's economy because of the innovation they bring, because of the jobs and wealth they create and the employees that they bring on board on their journey. Because of this importance, I have talked to a number of entrepreneurs about the employee share-ownership scheme. I am working with my colleagues in trying to get a better structure in place, so that there are incentives for highly skilled employees to join these fast-growing firms, these startups, these companies that have had success in recent years, like Atlassian or Freelancer. They have been success stories and we need more of them in Australia. That is why our policies are on the right track in helping create a better environment.

In terms of small exporters, there is a boost to the Export Market Development Grants program, which will help small- and medium-sized businesses access export markets. From working overseas in Europe, assisting trade and investment, and from working with small businesses, I know how important this sort of support is to getting it right. There is $15 million over four years to support small exporters.

Another positive initiative is the Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman and there is $8 million over four years to transform the existing office of the Australian Small Business Commissioner. And there is the company tax rate. It is so important to get company
taxes down to create more incentives for our businesses around Australia. This will provide a benefit for close to a million small and medium-sized businesses.

An important initiative of government is improving small business access to contracts. This is something that many raise with me—access to procurement and government contracts, and a better understanding of how they work. We are helping small businesses by providing close to $3 million to help access the Commonwealth procurement market, which will help them with their requirements to meet expensive insurance obligations and other compliance documentation. These are barriers when they are tendering for contracts. There is the new Commonwealth Contracting Suite for contracts valued under $200,000 which will make it easier for them as well. There are so many different areas that we are looking at to help with small businesses. I know the member for Deakin and others are working hard in their respective electorates to help small businesses and spread the message out there.

In terms of messages, I hosted a recent forum with the Minister for Small Business, Bruce Billson. Bruce is a member of our cabinet, and we are proud to have him in cabinet. Not only is he a very good minister and a great supporter of small businesses; he also sits around the table making key decisions. Unlike the members of the opposition who decide to play pass-the-parcel with the small business portfolio, we have placed a high importance on it, and that follows through with that appointment to cabinet. Small business as we know is so important for our country. It contributes about one-third of private sector contributions to the economy. Close to five million Australians are employed in the area, and this amounts to around 43 per cent of private sector employment—a significant contribution.

Small businesses around Australia have told me continually of how they are struggling and how they are finding the new challenges with their operations. They are looking for government to assist in any way it can whether it is through the competition policy review—another positive initiative of the government—or other programs. That will be released shortly for consultation. Its broad remit looks at regulations and other impediments across the economy which are restricting competition and reducing productivity, and are not in the broader public interest. It is also looking at job creation, innovation, investment and helping small businesses grow and prosper. All these things are so important for small businesses.

In closing, it is through a wide array of initiatives that we are helping small businesses—on infrastructure, on regulation and on reducing taxes. Small businesses know they have a friend with the Commonwealth government. We will keep on fighting for the best results for small businesses because we know how important they are for our society. We know how important they are for jobs for families. They are the heartbeat of the economy and they have innovation and provide direction for our local communities. We will do everything we can to support them.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (12:23): I thank the member for Hindmarsh for moving this motion because it gives me an opportunity to talk for 10 minutes at least on small business, which has been my life. I was a small-business owner for many years and I managed the trade association for small businesses in the recording sector for seven years. I worked with them to develop international markets and to develop the independent charts, which we still use. I have spent a lot of time in the sector. I listen to the rhetoric of the government, almost on a daily basis, and I am still looking for the action that meets that rhetoric. The competition review, for example, which the member for Hindmarsh said would be out shortly was actually
out at 11 am today. So far, I have found three pages that actually deal with small business. It seems to be about privatising health and education rather than the many things that small businesses were promised by this government.

A government member interjecting—

Ms OWENS: One day the member interjecting is going to realise that the promises you make actually matter—that the small business sector will judge you by the promises you make. The member for Hindmarsh in his motion referred to the Commonwealth procurement market, which is an incredibly important market for small business, as we all know. I was really pleased back in 2011 when the Labor government changed the procurement policies to improve access to government contracts for small business by introducing a basic contract suite which simplified the contract processes, dealt with complexities in insurance, provided appropriate insurance levels, simplified the language and made it much, much easier for small business to tender for government contracts.

During the period after 2011 the department continued to monitor the effect of the basic contract and by November last year they came up with a new draft to increase the threshold level from $80,000 to $200,000—and that is the change that the member for Hindmarsh is referring to when he talks about the government introducing this new procurement practice. It comes into effect on 1 July. It essentially builds on the 2011 model. It increases it to $200,000, because in the period from 2011 to 2012 alone there were 85,000 contracts with small business for less than $200,000. So it adjusts the level to the appropriate level—and that is a very, very good thing—but it comes after many years of work by the department and by previous governments and builds very much on the policy that was introduced in 2011. I thank the member for raising it today. It is an improvement. Increasing it to $200,000 from $80,000 is an improvement and better reflects the changes in the procurement market since that initial basic contract suite was introduced.

The member's motion also refers to a lovely figure that they bandy around a lot, which is that 519,000 jobs were lost in small business under Labor! Every time it is said I ponder it because I know that in the period of the Labor government, in spite of the global financial crisis, the number of small businesses in Australia actually grew by 39,000. So one has to wonder how in the period of the Labor government there can be nearly 40,000 more small businesses, yet we have a government that continues to repeat this figure of 519,000 jobs lost in small business even though small businesses grew.

A government member: It is a different statistic.

Ms OWENS: It is a different statistic, and I am going to deal with the statistic because it is actually really interesting. The ABS uses a completely different definition of 'small business' to anyone else. If you look around the different groups, ASIC says that a small business has a revenue of less than $25 million and fewer than 50 employees; the ATO has it as a turnover of less than $2 million; and Fair Work, 15 employees. But ABS has a unique one, which is less than 20 employees and then you are a small business. During the period of the Labor government, from 2007 to 2013, there was an actual reduction in the number of people employed in that sector in businesses of less than 20 people. There was, that is actually true, but what the government does not tell you is the number of medium businesses increased dramatically. So during that same time, the number of people employed by medium
businesses actually rose by 1.9 million to 2.7 million—a substantial increase in the medium sector of businesses, which are businesses of more than 20 people and less than 200 people.

So what we had here was the number of small businesses decreasing and medium businesses increasing. It could be that the small businesses grew, for example. It could be that they grew so they no longer appeared in the ABS group of less than 20, because suddenly they had more than 20 people. That would account for the fact that there are so many more people employed in small business. In fact; during the period of the Labor government there was an annualised 1.8 per cent increase in the number of employed people, including an additional 822,000 people in medium-size businesses and an additional 757,000 people in large businesses. And there was an additional 39,000 small businesses in the economy. So the government is very, very good! We have seen the government's slight of hand in many, many cases over the last year. We have seen their extraordinary capacity to take one figure and turn it into something else. This is absolutely another case of this. Only the Abbott government would think it was problematic that small businesses with less than 20 people grew to be bigger ones. Only the Abbott government would find that problematic, but they do. It is a convenient figure they can keep bandying about to confuse the issue and make quite an effective small business strategy appear other than it is. I can tell you, Member for Hindmarsh, that it is actually a good thing when a business with fewer than 20 people employs more than 20 people. It is actually good to employ more. It is good to move from the ABS category of fewer than 20 people into the medium one. It is a very good thing.

The extraordinary thing about the Abbott government's rhetoric when it comes to small businesses is the notion of certainty. If you remember, prior to the last election we had a government that was all about certainty: 'We need to provide certainty for business.' Since they have come to government, it has been anything but certainty. You can see the recent announcement of the removal of the instant tax write-off, for example, and the loss carry-back, which has been on and off and the dates were unknown. Then the dates were going to be announced, then the dates were announced, and now they are retrospective. We have businesses that made decisions in the last financial year based on tax law as it was and who will now have to pay additional tax because the tax law has been changed in retrospect. There is nothing certain about that. In fact, it is perhaps the most extraordinary case of uncertainty in the government's short history so far—that you would actually tell businesses that operated under existing tax law in the last financial year that in the next financial year they are going to backdate the law and the businesses will have to pay more tax. There will be hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of small businesses that will be paying more tax unexpectedly because of that backdating.

Look at family day-care providers. They are still unsure about what is going to happen with the funding. They are in every sense small businesses. There has been $157 million of funding cut or put on hold. In my state of New South Wales, there are 231 of these services, supporting thousands of educators, who are all small businesses. They have been waiting and waiting for the government to make any clear statement about what their future will be. The government in the election said that the new changes would not affect existing businesses: 'Go ahead, make your plans, invest. We're for certainty. We won't change the law relating to existing businesses.' But they have. How is that for certainty! They tell you one thing; they tell you that they are going to stick to their word; they tell you that they are not going to affect
you; and then they do. They ripped the funding away from literally thousands of small-business operators with no notice and, in fact, in complete disregard of the promises they made.

Look at the submarines in Adelaide. Look at the election promise: 'We will build 12 submarines in Adelaide. We will do that.' They were still saying they had not made up their mind. So people actually made investment decisions based on that guarantee. Small businesses made investment decisions based on that guarantee. And what happens? Gone. So much for certainty! In fact, the rhetoric by this government is phenomenal: 'We're for small business'. But their actions are completely the opposite.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (12:33): It gives me great pleasure to second this motion. I think what we just heard then from the member for Parramatta was confirmation that the Labor Party has learnt nothing from its six years of dismal failure in small business. We have just heard a recitation of how small business is thriving and how there are no problems in small business. In fact, in six years the only problem with small-business policy under the Labor policy was that these businesses grew to become medium-sized businesses. That is the most outrageous and out-of-touch thing I have heard. The data does not prove it. You can make up any statistics you want to try and prove an argument, but you have just proved how out of touch you are with society.

So I will go to small businesses in Deakin and say, 'The member for Parramatta thinks small business is thriving,' and they will say: 'Oh, yes, that's the same party that imposed the carbon tax. That's the same party that voted against the repeal of the carbon tax.' I am glad we have had that confirmation today. Talking about certainty, I must touch on that point too: six small business ministers in six years. For the member for Parramatta to try and have a straight face while coming out with that guff is absolutely outrageous.

I will go back to the motion, which is an absolutely outstanding motion put forward by the member for Hindmarsh. It is an example of the high priority that this coalition government places on supporting small business—not outrageous rhetoric that we get from those opposite. Small businesses, as the member for Hindmarsh said, are the backbone of our economy, and certainly the backbone of the economy in my electorate of Deakin. Having grown up in a small business family, I am acutely aware of the tremendous opportunities and hardships that life in small business can present for all those involved.

There are over 13,000 small businesses in my electorate of Deakin. The vast majority of them are businesses that, quite frankly, are doing it tough and really go month to month in trying to make ends meet. The figure of 12,000 to 13,000 small businesses per electorate is not particularly unusual to Deakin; it is actually quite representative around the country. Small businesses drive employment, innovation and growth, contributing about one-third of private industry's contribution to the economy and employing around 4.5 million Australians, or about 43 per cent of private sector employment. Of course, those employment figures were significantly higher under the Howard government when small business represented 53 per cent of private sector employment.

Regrettably, as I have touched on, over the last six years 519,000 jobs were lost in small business. Labor have never prioritised nor understood small business, with their focus primarily on large, unionised corporations. The coalition government has made it clear from the outset that we value small business and have been implementing plans to help rebuild the
sector. The Prime Minister commenced by appointing a Minister for Small Business, the Hon. Bruce Billson, and ensuring that he sits in the cabinet. The small business sector can rest assured that Minister Billson is advocating for their needs and interests at the cabinet table.

At the same time, the government moved the small business policy function into Treasury, recognising small business issues should be factored into wider economic policy. These fundamental changes demonstrated a level of respect and appreciation for the small business sector, which has been missing under Labor, and a commitment to restoring business confidence and supporting the sector. But we are changing a lot of the issues surrounding small business. We are making significant changes to improve the life of small business.

Going to the motion, the government has demonstrated its commitment to providing $2.8 million over four years to make it easier for small businesses to do business with government. We have heard about the Commonwealth contract suite for contracts valued under $200,000. We have also implemented a ‘pay on time or pay interest’ policy to ensure that small businesses, where cash flow is so important, are not disadvantaged by slow payment.

We believe that small business have a lot to offer government. We want to be able to access the goods and services that they provide and we want that to increase the competition for government contracts, benefiting taxpayers and government alike. I could talk about numerous other commitments—cutting the carbon tax, the competition policy review and the new Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman—but our time is limited today; so I just conclude by reiterating my strong support for the motion.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (12:39): The motion that is before us today actually demonstrates a number of great myths that the Liberal government and the Nationals like to perpetuate about small business. It is also a wonderful piece of window-dressing and the pretence that there is a government actually doing something for small business. In the previous contribution, what I did discover is that the member for Deakin and I do have something in common. I, too, grew up in a small business family. My parents owned a second-hand furniture business on the Sunshine Coast, and I spent many summers working there as a child. It was just what you did. We did not get school holidays like most other kids because we were helping out in the shop.

They had one employee, but predominantly the business was being run by my parents—they did the work. That is the traditional small business. What is not being talked about in this debate and this motion is the changing face of small business. There has been an explosion of people who are being forced into their own small businesses through subcontracting and this is not your traditional face of small business. Take, for example, the cleaning industry, where cleaners are being forced into their own ABN subcontracting arrangements. They do not have the same on-costs as traditional small businesses: they do not have rent to pay and they do not have the set-up costs involved in running a small business—they do not have those overheads. They have a company that they subcontract to. Quite often they receive their uniforms from the company, they receive their supply of chemicals from the company and they are paid by the company. So within this debate about small business, we need to start talking about the definition, not just in terms of the number of employees but also in terms of the nature of small business today.

What we are also seeing from this government—and they like to talk about the good things they are doing—is that they do not talk about what they are taking away. We have seen this
government backing away from key reforms introduced by the former Labor government that really made a difference—tax incentives that really made a difference to small businesses. This is where I am talking about what this government has introduced which is $5 billion worth of tax assistance to small businesses. This includes increasing what Labor did in government which was to increase the instant tax write-off threshold from $1,000 to $6,500. This allowed businesses to reinvest in their own equipment, which could be anything from upgrading or purchasing a new ute to other equipment they may need for their business. This government has also abolished tax relief to allow carry-back tax losses for up to a million dollars that businesses can receive as a refund against their previous tax paid. These are measures that were helping small business that this government has now abolished.

In this motion, the government talks about what they have done for government procurement. Well, let's talk about what they are doing in defence procurement. Just a couple of local examples: ADA is a manufacturer in the Bendigo electorate. They were quite excited to hear that this government had awarded a new defence manufacturing contract to ADA in Australia. But that work will not be performed in Australia. That work will go to the lower-priced jobs overseas—to small business and businesses overseas. So when it comes to procurement this government may have introduced some new guidelines, but the actual work when it comes to procurement is still going to overseas companies.

There is no greater example of that than what is happening in defence manufacturing. I know from talking locally to Thales Australia and the supply chain, that when it comes to the Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle—that great iconic defence vehicle that has been manufactured in Bendigo—there are a number of small businesses that feed into that supply chain. They are worried about the next contract at Bendigo Thales. Will this government do the right thing and award that contract, the Hawkeye contract, to Bendigo Thales? There are a number of small businesses locally that will benefit from that contract.

This motion is a bad motion. It tries to perpetuate these myths about Labor and small business. Worse still, it is window-dressing—window-dressing that tries to cover up what this government is actually doing to hurt small business. That is why I am encouraging people to vote against this motion. There are a number of areas that we could go on about, about how this government is hurting small business when it comes to the RET and what that is going to do to our solar industry and when it comes to manufacturing as I have talked about. When they talk about this great red-tape repeal—(Time expired)

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (12:44): I commend the member for Hindmarsh for his motion. As we know, the coalition, the minister, the small business minister in particular and every member on this side, including those who are sitting here, well understand that small business is the engine room of the Australian economy. I am the daughter of small-business owners and I am in small business myself, so I certainly understand what it takes to be in small business and to build a business from scratch. We know that this measure is so important, particularly to a lot of rural and regional communities right around Australia.

Of the over two million actively trading businesses in Australia, almost 96 per cent are small businesses and 3.8 per cent are medium businesses. Between the two, they employ nearly 70 per cent of the nation's private sector workers, or 59 per cent of all Australian workers. We understand on this side, after the neglect of Labor, how important small business...
is. We also know that small business has never had a better friend in Canberra than the Abbott government. We have delivered a new way for small businesses to interact with the Commonwealth, with real powers, through the transition of the Small Business Commissioner into the Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman.

For those of us who have actually owned small businesses, it can often be frustrating for smaller businesses to make sense of the often complex information and broad array of services the government offers. The government is actively and practically helping businesses to help themselves. The ombudsman will provide straightforward advice that will help businesses understand disputes and how they can be avoided in the future—practical, simple solutions. Part of the responsibility of this Commonwealth-wide advocate for small business and family enterprises is as a concierge for dispute resolution services and a contributor to the development of small-business-friendly Commonwealth laws and regulations. That is really important when you are the people on the ground in your small businesses, with the limited amount of time that you have and the workload that you carry, and also the personal investment that you place in your business.

The ombudsman will seamlessly link with the government's Single Business Service to help small business easily find out about other government services and programs, including general business advice. I encourage small businesses to look at the Australian tax office small-business assist 24/7 service and its after-hours call back service. This is very important for small business people who work in their businesses as well as on their businesses. Time is so critical—we have understood that in the measures we have taken. That the ATO has small-business fix-it squads and small-business assistance visits is very practical for small businesses.

We have also set up a new unit to provide specialist service on contracts and to ensure small businesses are not disadvantaged as part of Commonwealth departments' tendering and procurement processes. The Abbott government has allocated $2.8 million over four years to deliver on this important commitment, which will help small businesses access Commonwealth contracts. Small businesses are constantly telling us on this side that contracting documents and accompanying obligations, including requirements to have very expensive insurance, can be overly complex and difficult to manage. The $2.8 million in funding in the next four years will set up a Department of Finance unit to work directly with small businesses to develop procurement guidance material tailored specifically for small businesses.

The federal government has also moved on its election commitment to extend unfair contract term protections from consumers to small businesses through the white paper. While the Australian Consumer Law currently protects individual consumers from unfair terms in standard-form contracts, it does not currently provide such safeguards for small business. Small businesses, like individual consumers, are often offered pre-prepared contracts on a take-it-or-leave-it basis and can lack the resources to effectively navigate or negotiate these contracts. They are also time poor and they have invested so much—it is their life, almost—in their small businesses. You meet so many small-business people for whom it is their one chance in life. They are having a red-hot go. What we want to see is more small businesses, more people, investing in themselves and their futures, so the measures taken by this government are very important to small businesses on the ground.
I commend the member for Hindmarsh on his motion. I really encourage all of the small businesses in my electorate—those who invest in themselves. They have a go, they put their hand up and, as I have heard the Minister for Small Business say previously, they invest everything. They put their houses on the line and often their cars. As he said previously, they sometimes even mortgage their kids to get into small business and just have a go. That is the passion of small business, which is why I am proud that we have a government that is supporting them.

Mr Ripoll (Oxley) (12:49): This motion, unfortunately, is not about supporting small business. It is not about giving assistance to small business. It is not about giving hope to small business. It is not about anything positive towards small business. This motion is all about scaremongering and peddling petty myths and untruths from the Liberal Party. It is more focused on Labor than it is on small business. I think that is a great shame and a great wasted opportunity in the House. I just say to the Liberal Party: shame on you. Shame on you for always claiming you are the supporters of small business, when in fact you just talk about small business. When it comes to supporting it, you always side with big business. You never side with small business, and there is evidence strewn everywhere of the facts. The facts are that when Labor was in government we did some real things for small business. We did not just talk about it.

It was Labor that increased the small business instant asset write-off threshold, from $1,000 under the Liberal Party to $6,500 under us. And guess who takes it away? The Liberal Party. The Labor Party give it for six years and the Liberal Party take it away the first day on the job. The first day on the job, the first thing they do for small business is take away the assistance that was put in place. This was helping small business make a difference. This was helping with their cash flow. This was the real sort of stuff. We hear all the bleating on the other side about small business putting everything on the line. Yes, they do—so give them a bit of a hand. That is what we did, particularly in one of the key areas of small business, which is cash flow.

In the 2012-13 budget it was Labor that announced we would provide tax relief for business by allowing them to carry back tax losses of up to $1 million, so they could receive a refund against tax already paid. That is real assistance, and that is something that has been really taken up by small business. In fact, from 2013-14 business were to be able to carry back tax losses for two years, not just one. What is the first thing the Liberal Party does when it gets in? It takes that assistance away from small business. It talks about it, but it takes it away. It does the hard stuff, the really bad stuff, to small business. These three tax incentives alone for business and small business, when combined, were worth in excess of $5 billion. That is what the Liberal Party took away from small business. They ripped $5 billion out of the heart of our economic driver in jobs and employment, which is small business. If you ever wanted a better example of the Liberals talking about small business but on the other hand hurting them, there it is.

They talk about jobs and job losses, but there could not be anything further from the truth. It does not matter how you dice it and slice it and look at the numbers, the reality is that during Labor's term in government from 2007 to 2013, the number of people employed by small business and business right across the board went from about 9½ million people to 10.6 million—a net annualised average increase of 1.8 per cent. That is quite significant and quite
good, particularly given that the rest of the world went backwards a long, long way. This was during the global financial crisis. This was when Labor acted to support small business. This was when we took it on ourselves to do the hard lifting to help small business, to help them to do the hard lifting as well. I know that any fair-minded, decent-thinking person would have done the same if they cared about small business. I am not even saying the Liberal Party might not have done the same. Maybe, if they had had the opportunity, they would have. But the evidence is not there, because when they get to government they take all the assistance away. The fact is that we have taken small business and grown them into medium business. We have taken medium business and grown them into larger businesses. We have made sure that under Labor we had the right policy settings in place, the right sort of assistance and the right sorts of measures, where it was not just about hot air and talk. There actually was direct assistance. We did a lot of things to support small business and business directly, and I am really proud of that.

It was also Labor that commissioned the first national Small Business Commissioner in this country, because we knew that small business needed a direct national voice to government. I am very happy to say that that position should stay in place. The Liberal Party, while they might have watered down some of the roles of the Small Business Commissioner, have at least had the decency to keep that role in place. It was Labor that set up the superannuation clearing house to reduce red tape and the paperwork burden on small business. It was Labor that put the national business names register in place, instead of having disparate systems all over the country. Small business went from paying an average of $1,000 across the country to just $30. There was online standard business reporting. That is what you do to support small business. Labor does not talk about small business; it supports them.

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (12:54): In electorates such as Dobell, small-business operators are the engine room of our economy and deserve support and recognition from government. I am proud to represent the 8,939 businesses based in my electorate. The member for Hindmarsh is correct in saying that small business is a major driver of economic growth in Australia. This government has a strong track record in supporting business. We understand that you cannot have a strong and healthy society without a strong economy to sustain it, and you do not have a strong economy without profitable businesses. While this is a fact that has been lost on members opposite, this government has been delivering real relief and assistance to small business operators Australia wide. Small business is the backbone of many regional economies. Unfortunately, many small-business operators find themselves time and resource poor. A major contributor to this has been the burden of compliance.

I have previously spoken in this place about real-life experiences of small-business operators in Dobell whose struggles with the cost of compliance impacted on their productivity and on their ability to grow, invest and create new jobs. The cost of compliance is a major barrier to growth. The average Australian business deals with eight regulators in a given year, spends close to four per cent of their total annual expenditure on complying with regulatory requirements, and spends approximately 19 hours a week on compliance-related activities.

This government is addressing the issue of excessive regulation, and earlier this year we held the Regulation Repeal Day, which removed $700 million worth of compliance costs from our economy. For small-business operators, Regulation Repeal Day removed specific
regulatory requirements, many applicable to textile, clothing and footwear suppliers under Commonwealth government contracts. This government also removed regulatory imposts applicable to more than 20,000 annual tender processes for Commonwealth departmental and agency contracts. This resulted in the removal of tendering costs associated with Commonwealth government contracts otherwise not incurred by business when dealing with the private sector.

A major obstacle facing small-business operators in securing government contract is the 'take it or leave it' condition. Small businesses, like individual consumers, are often offered pre-prepared contracts on a 'take it or leave it' basis, and many lack the resources to effectively navigate or negotiate these contracts. As part of the budget, the government is committed to $1.4 million to support the extension to small businesses of unfair contract term protections, currently available to consumers. A further $2.8 million is allocated over the next four years to establish a unit within the Department of Finance dedicated to providing specialist advice on Commonwealth government contracts and conducting business with government. Such assistance will ensure that small-business operators are well informed to compete on a level playing field with big business and are not disadvantaged when dealing with Commonwealth government procurement. Such practical help will contribute to turning around the fortune of small-business operators and reverse the trend of small-business closures that we unfortunately experienced under the former Labor government.

As a result of the former Labor government's actions, we saw 519,000 jobs lost across the small-business sector. In my electorate of Dobell, small business is collectively the largest employer, employing approximately 40,000 people. As the member for Dobell, growing the Central Coast economy and providing jobs close to where people live is a key priority.

This government acknowledges the role small business can play in delivering services and vital infrastructure on behalf of the Commonwealth government. In Dobell, we have recently seen local companies, such as RelativeMilat, based at Tuggerah, successful in tendering in competition with larger, out-of-region firms as part of the NBN rollout. This sends the message to other local businesses in Dobell that they too can be a reliable supplier for Commonwealth services.

Furthermore, increased competition will deliver better value for the taxpayer's dollar, and the potential to see direct investment in regional economies driven by small businesses successfully tendering for Commonwealth government contracts. This government's actions recognise and support the role small businesses play within the Australian economy, and acknowledge their capacity to deliver outcomes for Commonwealth departments and agencies.

The measures outlined in this motion demonstrate that this government is proactively assisting small business to become more productive, to contribute to the Australian economy and to provide opportunity to grow, hence resulting in more local jobs in our communities. I commend the member for Hindmarsh on his motion.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (12:59): I would like to strongly support the first point of this motion that acknowledges that small businesses are a major driver of economic growth in Australia. I would also like to strongly support that small businesses make an enormous contribution, that they often do not have the resources and that they face significant obstacles.
As a person that has both worked in small business and owned a small business, I really do understand the issues that relate to small business. But I always find it amusing when members on the other side of this parliament stand up and portray themselves as the friends of small business, when in actual fact everything they do, every action that they take, make it harder for small businesses to survive. It seems to be the rhetoric that they adopt. In actual fact, they are the friends of big business and the friends of exporting jobs overseas and exporting small business opportunities overseas rather than actually contributing to the day-to-day viability of small businesses.

We only have to look at the recent announcements in relation to defence and the Abbott government’s failure to support future submarines in Australia. At every opportunity that they have had, they have failed to actually take up the cudgel, get in there and fight for small business. They use the rhetoric of cutting red tape. Well, I only see this government putting in place more red tape. Their repeal day was a joke day. They talk about repealing redundant Commonwealth legislation. A lot of the legislation that they repealed was just about the wording in the legislation. It is just what this government does so well—creating a smokescreen, creating an atmosphere where they purport to be doing something when in actual fact they are doing nothing.

This motion talks about employment opportunities and how there has actually been a decrease in the number of people that were employed in small business during the time that Labor was in power. That is correct—it did go down from 5.1 million to 4.5 million. But what happened was that those people actually moved to medium-sized businesses, and there was a 6.2 per cent increase in employment in that sector.

This government has ripped benefits away from small business. The instant asset write-off that was in place allowed businesses to write off the taxable proportion of the value of an asset that cost less than $6½ thousand. The number of assets it could be applied to was unlimited. From 1 January this threshold was to be increased to $1,000. This is gone now under this government, showing a total lack of respect for small business. It is the same with special depreciation rules for motor vehicles. Gone! This government actually shows a lack of commitment to small business, shows a lack of commitment to innovation and takes money away from all the areas that support small business. I know that members on the other side of this House argue the opposite way, but when you get there and you look at actually what has happened, you see that this government has been attacking small business not supporting small business.

It is organisations like the Lake Macquarie Business Growth Centre that actually support businesses on the ground, that provide help and encouragement to get around the hurt and impost that has been placed on them by this cruel, mean Abbott government.

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (13:04): I am delighted to support this motion today because it is in support of small business, and to be able to outline just some of the measures that this fantastic government is undertaking to make life easier for small businesses across Australia, particularly in my electorate and on the Central Coast. I commend the member for Hindmarsh for moving this motion, because small business is one of the largest drivers of economic growth in our nation and one of the best local economic drivers of growth on the Central Coast, and small business has this government’s support.
There are more than two million small and micro businesses in Australia, which account for 95 per cent of the total number of businesses across the country. More than 12,000 of these are in the Gosford local government area and they make a significant contribution to the Central Coast. Nearly half of Australia’s private, non-financial workforce are employed by small business, and they contribute 35 per cent of Australia’s production. Unfortunately, those on the other side of the chamber, when they were in government, sought to impose barriers to the success of small business. Under Labor, 519,000 jobs were lost in small business, and the procurement market was a closed shop with such significant restrictions and barriers that small business could not compete with the time, complexity and insurance obligations.

Rod Dever from ORS employment solutions, a recruitment agency based in my electorate in Gosford, told me that the key is the amount of time it takes to administer a small business. This includes reporting, paperwork to the tax office and payments that can add on so much extra time. This is on top of the daily running of a business, which requires a high level of dedication, often for long hours, and nearly always seven days a week. Rod said to me that it is the burden of registrations, regulation and accreditation that all cost time and money. There are also fees from all levels of government which, he claimed, can eat into the dollars made on a daily basis. These are just some of the challenges faced by small business to meet basic requirements, to secure government contracts. But this government, through Minister for Small Business Bruce Billson, is taking the brakes off small businesses and once again working to help them thrive.

We have allocated $2.8 million over four years to assist small business to access the Commonwealth procurement market. This was a commitment that we made prior to the election and that we are delivering on. This package will see a special unit set up within the Department of Finance to work with small business in order to develop the resources that employers need. The government have also committed to repealing burdensome, unnecessary and stifling regulation with our regulation repeal days. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Josh Frydenberg, has taken charge of this agenda and our efforts have removed the regulatory imposts that apply to more than 20,000 annual tender processes for Commonwealth agency work, which imposed additional costs on companies, particularly small business, compared to contracts in the private sector.

In conjunction with our first repeal day, the government have also undertaken a range of reforms to grants and procurement processes which include standard contract terms being applied across agencies for procurements under $200,000; a standard agreement template for low-risk grants across agencies; and the use of credit and debit cards for payments under $20,000—previously $10,000—which should assist small businesses with cash flow. These changes have been estimated to lead to an annual saving of $62.23 million in compliance costs.

I also know from my experience and from talking to many small businesses on the Central Coast that, when given the chance and a level playing field, small business can deliver a much better product than some of the larger players. By their very nature, they are innovators. As more small businesses enter the procurement market, I know they will inspire innovative solutions to many of our challenges. Daniel Farmer, the Regional Manager of the Central Coast NSW Business Chamber, has said to me that they want to have an open discussion
about issues that impact them. He said small businesses have been cautious but very encouraged by this government's changes that boost local jobs and boost local growth.

We have a tremendous, innovative small business community on the Central Coast, but they are time and resource poor and they face significant obstacles in securing government contracts. I encourage as many businesses as possible in my electorate of Robertson to come forward and compete for these contracts, no matter how small they may be. By working together with small business, the government wants to provide the right environment for small business to thrive, generate local jobs and build a stronger economy.

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (13:09): This motion demonstrates yet again the basic economic illiteracy of the coalition. All they have been able to deliver so far has been empty rhetoric regarding support for small business. In this motion they have plucked one single figure out of a period of outstanding economic growth between 2007 and 2013. It does not matter where the jobs are grown in Australia. It only matters that we grow Australian jobs. Under Labor, almost a million jobs were created. During the global financial crisis, when we saw tens of millions of jobs stripped out of economies worldwide, we grew just under a million jobs. This motion, which points to one single statistic, demonstrates the economic illiteracy of those opposite. It is not a surprise given the fact that they are led by a Prime Minister who Peter Costello said cannot be trusted on economics, a Prime Minister who slept through one of the most crucial votes on stimulus packages during the global financial crisis.

I am proud of Labor's support for small businesses when we were in government. I am proud of the fact that we implemented a $6,500 instant asset write-off that allowed small businesses around this country to instantly write off $6,500 worth of capital purchases, whether it was a new fridge and freezer for a cafe or a new piece of equipment for a machinery shop. This was a great initiative that is now under threat. We also put in place a new $350 million venture capital fund to ensure that the innovators that the member for Robertson nominated in her contribution could get the capital to grow their businesses so that they did not stay as small businesses but grew into medium and large-sized businesses.

We put in place the Australian Jobs Act—a great piece of legislation that compelled large projects to give Australian companies an opportunity to win work on their projects. This was matched with requiring large-scale companies that applied for $2 billion or more of EPBS concessions to put in place Australian supply chain offices in their global headquarters, to give Australian small businesses and SMEs a great opportunity to win work not just here but overseas in the large supply chains of large multinational corporations.

This is now all under threat. We have seen that the instant asset write-off has been withdrawn and withdrawn retrospectively. Those on the other side like to talk about the red tape. But imagine withdrawing, halfway through a tax year, a tax measure in the tax instant asset write-off. That means millions of small businesses who have already claimed deductions for this will have to go back to level one and pay more tax because of this government. Talk about imposing a red tape burden. They have also committed to repealing the Australian Jobs Act. They are effectively saying that they will not compel large projects built in this country to give Australian companies and Australian workers a first go at winning work on these projects. That demonstrates not just the economic illiteracy of the government but their hollow rhetoric when it comes to supporting small businesses.
Let us look at their broader employment record so far. It is an ugly piece of work. We have got the highest unemployment rate since November 2002. On trend terms, unemployment is at 6.2 per cent compared to the average under Labor of 5.1 per cent during a period of the GFC. We have an unemployment queue that is 67,000 people longer than when they came to power. We have 32,000 more long-term unemployed than when they came to power. We have the highest share of long-term unemployed amongst those looking for work since this statistic began to be collected in 2001.

Let me recap that. We have got the highest unemployment rate for 12 years and we have got the biggest share of long-term unemployed amongst those looking for work for over a decade. This is a real concern. We should be debating how to boost employment in this country and not attacking the previous government's records, which were quite fine, in my view.

We will see even worse coming up in terms of the impact of the budget. We have seen $1 billion cut from training that would have supported small businesses. We have seen $5.5 billion stripped out of the higher education sector that would have provided graduates for small businesses to lead innovation. We have seen over $1 billion in cuts to child care—child care that lets employees of small business go to work and make a contribution. We have seen their punitive attacks on Newstart which makes it harder for job seekers to find work.

The truth is that this government's economic performance is appalling so far. I have no hope that it will improve. Instead of concentrating on looking at how they can improve this performance, they are just determined to attack the Rudd-Gillard government's legacy on economics, which was fine. Look at their great stewardship during the global financial crisis, where we led the world in our response and grew nearly a million jobs. I condemn this motion.

Debate adjourned.

**BILLS**

**Australian Education Amendment (School Funding Guarantee) Bill 2014**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (13:15): I rise in support of the Australian Education Amendment (School Funding Guarantee) Bill 2014. This bill is very important for two main reasons. Firstly, this government, since coming to office, has broken its promise that no school would be worse off and the promise it made at the last election that it would keep the Gonski school funding model. This model is so critically important to ensure funding and resources are allocated on a needs basis. Unfortunately, the government has trashed that model. Secondly, Labor opposes this government's savage cuts to school education, whether it be in early childhood, primary or secondary school and all the way through to higher education. That legislation is currently before the Senate committee. These cuts will have devastating impacts on Australian students, the education sector and the economy. This bill should not be necessary, and it would not be necessary if the government had kept its word and fully implemented the Gonski school funding model.
Labor recognises the need for a national needs-based funding model designed to support the student resource standard by allocating extra funding for students with a disability, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and students from rural and regional communities to ensure that every student across the country is allocated the resources they need to achieve their best and that every school can be its best. Students support this model. Mums and dads support this model. Schools support this model. The sector supports this model. The Liberal Party supposedly also supported this model.

I remind the House that it was the now Minister for Education who on 29 August 2013, days before the last election, said to the mums and dads and the teachers of Australia:

… you can vote Liberal or Labor and you'll get exactly the same amount of funding for your school …

Like most things promised by those opposite before the election, the minister was misleading the Australian people.

Despite the reckless actions of this government, the bill before us today will stop Australian schools sliding backwards. It will put a stop to the savage cuts to schools that have been occurring under state Liberal governments, including more than $180 million in cuts inflicted upon students in Western Australia by Premier Barnett this year alone. These cuts are leaving our schools worse off. Left to continue, these cuts will lead to the decline of our educational facilities and education standards, leaving Australia poorer as a nation. Australian education standards and Australian graduates are world class. This government, with its budget of broken promises, wants to diminish Australia's intellectual reputation.

Labor had a plan for our schools, a plan that would have seen the Commonwealth, states and territories work together to improve educational standards for Australians everywhere. Tony Abbott pledged to honour his agreement to the Gonski school funding model but has since walked away from it. He has walked away for cynical political purposes. In doing this, he has put at risk a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that every Australian school is of the highest standard and that every student gets a fair and equal opportunity to achieve their best.

It is time for Tony Abbott to start admitting he got it wrong. It is time for the Prime Minister to fund years 5 and 6 in the budget and roll out the full agreement, as he promised to do before the election. No weasel words from the Prime Minister or from the Minister for Education can take away the fact that there was a clear commitment to Gonski—including signs in the member for Boothby's electorate on election day saying that the Liberal Party would match the Labor Party dollar for dollar. It is time for the government to keep that promise. But it is also important that we ensure that the states and territories do their bit to lift our education standards.

This bill will tie the Commonwealth funding for schools in every state and territory to the very basic principle that there are no more state education budget cuts. This bill is an important part of Labor's plan that the states and territories have signed up to, but we need a Commonwealth government that will hold them to account and ensure that together we are working to lift the education standards of our country. So I call on the government to support this important bill before the House today, and I hope that they will reconsider decent school funding. (Time expired)
Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (13:20): I rise today to speak on this farce of a private member's bill, the Australian Education Amendment (School Funding Guarantee) Bill 2014, yet again. Those opposite do not seem to be able to fathom the fact that the coalition government is actually putting more funding into schools. That is right: the coalition government restored the $1.2 billion that the previous Labor government stole from Australian schools. In Queensland, this means $794.3 million more funding, and this fact has been acknowledged by the Queensland Minister for Education, Training and Employment. And the coalition has not stopped there. The annual increase for all Queensland school sectors, government and non-government, for recurrent and capital spending is an increase of 10.8 per cent in 2014-15, an increase of 11.3 per cent in 2015-16, an increase of 10.7 per cent in 2017-18 and—yes, Madam Deputy Speaker—another increase in 2017-18 of 7.5 per cent. That is all increased spending. Total Commonwealth funding to government schools in Queensland will grow by $662.3 million by 2017-18, a 68.7 per cent increase from 2013-14, while the non-government sector will grow by 35 per cent over the same period.

It is indeed unfortunate that we cannot afford Gonski's original recommendations, which I would just like to point out are not at all the same as the model Labor tried to pass off as their Gonski reforms to ensure they got a media splash. No, unfortunately, due to the reckless spending and waste of the previous Labor government, we are currently experiencing the fastest increase of debt in our nation's modern history. Because of Labor, if nothing is done to rein in their spending commitments, we are looking at an interest bill of $3 billion each month, which is $300,000 million, or one new hospital, every month. This money is being wasted on interest repayments which could have been used to fund the full Gonski vision. It is wasted money because Labor put their irresponsible spending on the nation's credit card with no means to pay it off.

Just as bad as Labor's innate ability to rack up record levels of debt, their irresponsible levels of spending were not enough. No, instead they felt the need to pretend to the Australian people that they were spending even more. Indeed, when you look at the projected expenditure of Labor's education funding, it is hard to tell what it is—an economic sleight of hand or some malicious time bomb planted by reckless politicians who knew they would never have to face the reality and pay up.

It is shamelessly simple. The vast majority of Labor's so-called promised funding comes well after the forward estimates, so Labor never wrote it into a budget paper. In true Labor style they made up exciting slogans, printed pretty flyers on high-gloss paper and put out lots of press releases. But the reality behind these grandiose statements is about as genuine as Labor's infamous 'We will return to surplus this budget'—all myths.

As a party that pretend they are the ones who care most about education, not once did those opposite stop to think about how to get best value for the Commonwealth's education spend. Not once did they stop to think that, despite almost two decades of rivers of gold flowing into the school education sector, Australia's school testing scores continued to steadily decline. Yes, that is right: the Productivity Commission's Report on government services 2014 shows a graph clearly outlining Commonwealth spending on schools increasing, yet the program for international student assessment scores has been decreasing in both literacy and numeracy. This is because governments should not just recklessly throw money at our education system and hope for the best, as the previous Labor government did.
Instead, as the coalition government are doing through our Students First plan, we should focus on the four key areas that evidence shows will make a real difference for students. Those key areas are teacher quality, school autonomy, engaging parents and strengthening the curriculum. And, in an important point, Australian school education is actually the responsibility of the state governments. The federal government, which really has no responsibility over schools, contributes approximately 15 per cent of the total schooling budget for states and territories.

Just to recap, we have a coalition government that is actually increasing funding to schools beyond the forward estimates, is adding an additional $1.2 billion that Labor ripped away from schools and is ensuring that the money being spent will actually result in better outcomes for students and teachers. Only the coalition is putting Australian students first.

Debate adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Education, Training and Employment Programs

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this House:

(1) notes the importance of supporting young people transition from school into work or further training and preventing them from falling into the trap of unemployment;

(2) recognises the important work done in ensuring that students are supported to make the transition through:

(a) the Youth Connections program that has a proven track record in helping young people who have not or are at risk of not completing year 12, transition back into school or further education, training and employment;

(b) the School Business Community Partnership Brokers program which builds partnerships between schools and the wider community including business and charities that help young people achieve year 12 or equivalent qualifications; and

(c) National Career Development Strategy services that support vital links between industry, students and training options;

(3) is extremely concerned that there is no funding in the budget for these programs past 1 January 2015; and

(4) calls on the Government to immediately reverse its decision to no longer fund these programs past the 2014 calendar year.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (13:25): I believe this is an exceptionally important motion because it deals with youth unemployment, with the transition of young people from school to work and with making sure that they can actually achieve that goal.

I was absolutely shocked at the simple fact that, in this budget, the funding for Youth Connections was cut. Youth Connections is a fantastic program. It has a great track record and it has really delivered in my electorate, and particularly on the Central Coast. I noticed that the member for Robertson and the member for Dobell came to this House and spoke about small business. I thought that they would be up here speaking up this particular private member's motion. The Central Coast is an area in Australia that has a very low retention rate and an extremely high youth unemployment rate. It is an area that Youth Connections has played a very important role in. There have been a number of programs. One program that I
have been particularly involved with—and I might say it no longer exists since the budget—was the Brighter Futures local solutions program, which really delivered to young people on the Central Coast.

Youth Connections on the Central Coast works with organising work placements and partnership brokers. It has innovative learning programs, ability programs and youth reference groups. Bara Barang is working with the local Darkinjung people and delivering a program in that area. In the Lake Macquarie part of my electorate, I have an employment group that works out of my office. We have run a number of events locally. We are also working on identifying jobs in demand in the area and then going out and talking to providers and trainers that would be able to provide those people that are looking for work with the skills they need to obtain work. Youth Connections has been one of the organisations that have had a lot of input into that. It had a lot of input into an employment expo that we held down in Windale a couple of years ago—a community day where we brought the whole community together. The role it plays in connecting unemployed youth, or youth that are leaving school, with work is vitally important.

On apprenticeships, this government has attacked apprenticeships. One of the areas where we have been working hard on locally has been attracting students at the local high schools to undertake school-based apprenticeship training. It has been very successful and, once again, Youth Connections has been really active in that space. This government uses rhetoric and puts in place harsh programs that are going to make it hard for young people when they leave school to actually achieve that goal of a job—even to undertake the training, when they will have no financial support whilst they are doing it. The organisations that have been funded to provide them with the support and training that they need can no longer function because they have been defunded. This leaves young people in a situation where they are devoid of hope and of opportunities, and at the same time those organisations I have talked about are no longer in a space where they can operate and give the training they would like to—the partnership brokerage. Even books like the job guide the department produced which provided information on jobs and training will no longer be funded by this government after next year. In every area resources are being taken away, and at the same time there is this enormous demand being placed on young people to find jobs. They have to do that without resources. They have to do it without support, and the organisations have been defunded.

(Time expired)

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (13:30): I commend the member for Kingston and the member for Shortland for noting the importance of supporting young people transitioning from school to earning or learning. This is a critically important issue for my electorate and, indeed, it is a critically important issue for Australia. Unfortunately, however, this motion before the House is typical of Labor’s approach to problem-solving: they list a series of programs, ignore the outcomes and call for more funding. It is typical of how they approach government: no focus on results.

As a new parliamentarian, it is this lack of focus on results I am determined to highlight and address because government has to be about more than posturing. It has to be about outcomes. It has to be about delivery. Let us take a look at the failures we have seen in the youth unemployment and training area in recent years. Between 2008 and last year we saw an eight per cent reduction in youth employment rates, while the overall employment market
increased by eight per cent. We saw participation rates for people under the age of 25 falling from 71 per cent to 66 per cent, having climbed in the previous five years. We are at the point now where we have youth unemployment rates of about 12½ per cent compared to 6 per cent in the overall economy. One in three unemployed people is aged under 25 and we have hotspots of youth unemployment like Burnie and Devonport where youth unemployment rates are over 20 per cent. This is a very serious problem that the previous government completely failed to address.

Let us take a look at apprenticeships and training. In the final quarter of 2013, commencements in apprenticeships were 19.6 per cent lower than for the same quarter in the previous year and completions were 24 per cent lower. These numbers are worrying, but the numbers are even bleaker when we look at trades and technical training. As the AiG employer survey from 2012 shows, technicians and trade workers represent the most significant areas of skills shortage. It is a much larger number than for any other occupational group, with 33.3 per cent of survey respondents noting shortages in this area. Completion rates for Australian apprenticeships are unacceptably low at 55.4 per cent. That means almost 45 per cent of people undertaking apprenticeships never actually complete—45 per cent. What an extraordinary economic cost to Australia! Meanwhile we had the Labor Party claiming that their programs were going to fix this, but of course they did not.

In contrast to Labor, the Abbott government will be and is focusing on outcomes. We have set ourselves a target of creating one million jobs in five years and two million jobs in 10 years. Even the ABC Fact Check—God bless it—agrees that we are on target to achieve that outcome. Our policies to resolve the twin issues of chronic youth employment and chronic skills gaps are and will continue to be completely results driven. We are rolling out a series of services that will help engage young people with work—these include work for the dole, the revised Job Services Australia program and the Green Army Program.

In my electorate, five Green Army projects are in the process of starting up and, as of this month, the call has gone out for 17- to 24-year-olds to form the first round of recruits to the Green Army. This will become the largest ever team of young Australians supporting environmental action across the country. Participants will be able to undertake accredited training, such as work readiness, conservation and land management, heritage conservation, project and human resource management, or heritage trade skills.

Participation is open to a diverse range of young people, including Indigenous Australians, school leavers, gap year students, graduates and job seekers. Under the previous Howard government, we saw a 13 per cent increase in youth employment rates, with a strong focus on the Green Corps. This is the direction that the Abbott government will be taking—results focused and delivering, not just talking.

Another exciting program for young people is the Trade Support Loans scheme, enabling apprentices to access financial support over the course of their apprenticeship in a manner that is akin to the HELP or HECS scheme for university students. The completion incentive built into the loan structure is particularly commendable.

The Work for the Dole program will be reinvigorated to ensure practical work experience and direct connections in a work-like environment are given top priority. We will be encouraging those aged under 30 to be learning or earning. Our programs will always be
focused on outcomes. Few issues can be more important for the future of this country than delivering growth and creating jobs for the young. It is our strong commitment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Andrews): 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.

Sitting suspended from 13:36 to 16:00

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Footscray Bulldogs

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (16:00): I rise today to pay tribute to the mighty Footscray Bulldogs team, who scored their third consecutive VFL grand final win yesterday. Ninety years after Con McCarthy led Footscray to back-to-back-to-back state league flags in 1923 and 1924, Chris Maple's charges made it a threepeat in Footscray's first year back in the VFL competition as a stand-alone outfit. It should be noted that the Bulldogs left the then VFA, after winning the flag in 1924, to join the VFL ranks. 2014 marks their return to the VFL, and what a way to come back—winning the flag. The score at the final siren was Footscray 109 to Box Hill Hawks 87—a great result, considering Box Hill's dastardly ploy to play Hawthorn premiership champion Cyril Rioli in the VFL final. Trailing by 18 points early in the final term, the grid of the playing group, led by best-on-ground Brett Goodes and Lin Jong in the midfield, wrestled back control to kick the last six goals of the game. Goodes and Jong demonstrate the success of Indigenous Australians and of multiculturalism in footy in Melbourne's west, and they are heroes across the football fields in Melbourne's west today.

The crowd of 23,816 was an attendance record at the VFL Grand Final at Etihad and the biggest VFL crowd in over 30 years. I congratulate the president of the Footscray Bulldogs, Peter Gordon, and the CEO, Simon Garlick, for their vision in fielding a stand-alone VFL side, and particularly for bringing footy back to Whitten Oval. I had the pleasure of giving my daughter her first taste of suburban footy at Whitten Oval at the derby with Williamstown Seagulls earlier this year, and I keenly anticipate making it a family tradition in the future.

Ormond College: Pitch Project

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (16:02): Last month I had the privilege of judging the Pitch Project at Ormond College at the University of Melbourne. This was a judging competition between two groups of students who had put together a community based proposal to assist with youth unemployment. Each of the projects was pitched as a program that could be run in each of our electorates to help provide job opportunities for young Australians. Both projects had been worked on extensively by the groups of students, who worked as teams. Then, as the title of the project suggests, they pitched them to me as the judge. I want to commend all of the students for the hard work that they did: in the first team, Jack Armstrong, Lee Ellison, Stephanie Priestley, Hugh Matthews and Ned Balderstone; and in the second team, Isabella Borshoff, Oscar Shaw, Saska Holloway and Huw Hutchison. It was the second team that was successful, but can I say that both were of a very high standard and I commend them and Ormond College for conducting the project.
Lymphoma Awareness Month

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:03): September is Lymphoma Awareness Month, a chance to raise awareness of Australia's most common blood cancer. September is a chance to promote symptom recognition for both Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin lymphomas to aid in early diagnosis and to raise much-needed funds for research.

Earlier this month I farewelled from Parliament House a group of cyclists who were embarking on the annual Parliament2Opera ride. The Parliament2Opera ride is a three-day, 300-kilometre ride from Parliament House to the Opera House, via Goulburn and Mittagong, to raise awareness of lymphoma. The ride began in 2011 when three friends decided to cycle from Sydney to Canberra, purely for the challenge. However, a couple of days before the ride one of the three, Canberra Jovan Pejic, was diagnosed with stage 3 follicular non-Hodgkin lymphoma, aged just 24. At the time, like many Australians, Jovan and his family knew very little about lymphoma. His resilience and desire to increase awareness about this cancer meant that the plans for the bike ride continued but now with a mission to highlight this little-known cancer. Three years on, the ride is now an annual event with an ever-growing team of awe-inspiring and passionate participants. This year, at the end of the three day ride the cyclists were met with the spectacular sight of the opera house lit up in lime green, well and truly putting lymphoma in the limelight.

Congratulations to all involved, and thank you for your dedication to increasing awareness of lymphoma.

Northern Territory Fashion Week

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (16:05): The Northern Territory has magnificent colour, style and beauty. From the ochre deserts of Central Australia to the majesty of Uluru, with the sparkling blue of our coastal waters and the lush green of our wetlands we are blessed to live in one of the most special places in the world. The Territory provides a perfect backdrop for the striking fabrics and fashions that will be on display during Northern Territory Fashion Week, which starts on 26 October. Northern Territory Fashion Week is growing in reputation and stature. It is a vehicle for showcasing the best Territory fashion and design as well as developing new and sustainable industries in our major centres and indeed the bush. As patron, I am proud to be part of this fantastic, groundbreaking initiative and congratulate CEO Meriel Corbett-Weir and Managing Creative Director Mehali Tsangaris for their vision and drive.

Thanks to supporters Nadine Jones from Southern Cross TV, Miranda Hodge and David Hartford from North Line, Monica Richly from Zise graphics, Greg Ambrose-Pearce, from Kerry's Automotive Group, Harley Paroulakis from Centrepoint Business Centre, Tiffany Manzie from Simon Says TV and the Country Liberal government. Without their support, Northern Territory Fashion Week would not be possible.

Shortland Electorate: Education

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:06): Last week I was privileged to attend a number of year 12 farewells and presentations in the electorate. I was overwhelmed by the quality and the achievements of the young people who were present at these presentation nights. Each year, I award a prize at most of these schools, and the prize generally is for citizenship. This year at Whitebridge High School Shanais Staneke won the prize for
citizenship. At Swansea High School it was Peter Wilson. At Hunter Sports High School it was Danielle Reading, and at Northlakes High School it was Luke James. Belmont High School was a little bit different. At Belmont High I give an award for science and technology, and that was won by Jed Dunning. Warners Bay and Lake Munmorah also had presentations during the week and similarly demonstrated the achievements of their students.

It is phenomenal that we have young people finishing 13 years of education and going out into the workforce, into study, having achieved so much and having so much to offer our Australian community. We need to embrace them. We need to provide them with every opportunity possible so they can move from school to work and along the way develop the qualifications they need.

Boothby Electorate: Bushfires

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (16:08): With bushfire season approaching I would like to remind my constituents living in the Mitcham hills and upper Sturt that it is very important that they have a proper bushfire action plan and do what they can to support the efforts of the Sturt CFS, which protects our local community. Earlier this year bushfires in Blair National Park served as a wake-up call for many residents of that area. From my recent discussions with the state emergency services minister, steps have been taken to minimise any future risk from freight trains in that area. However, it was a reminder that bushfire preparation is everybody’s responsibility. A recent report described the area as ‘a disaster waiting to happen’, with low preparedness a major factor. I urge local residents to make sure that they have a comprehensive bushfire action plan in place. Just thinking ‘I will leave early’ is not enough. A proper plan helps you to take action and avoid making last-minute decisions that could prove deadly during a bushfire.

It is also very important that you think about how you can help the CFS protect you. For example, parking illegally on the side of the road is an ongoing issue and particularly in that area can impede access for fire trucks. I would like to draw attention to the Sturt CFS tanker appeal. Currently they have only one tanker, which is not adequate. They are very close to achieving the goal of purchasing a second tanker. The community support has been great. They have raised $170,000 out of the required $200,000. I encourage local residents to help with their final funding push.

Angel Flight

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:10): Charity organisation Angel Flight flies rural and regional patients and their families to vital medical appointments. For more than 10 years Angel Flight has carried out $50 million worth of mercy missions in isolated areas throughout Australia.

However, the Civil Aviation and Safety Administration is proposing changes that will increase regulation and have a serious impact on this volunteer service. These changes include setting up an organisation to be responsible for assessing and authorising Angel Flight pilots and requiring pilot proficiency tests and assessment. This will be costly and time-consuming. The regulation is a duplication of what is already being completed by pilots volunteering within this organisation and the proposed changes would add red tape and compliance costs. These changes pose a real threat of forcing the closure of this valuable organisation to rural Australia.
Angel Flight plays an important role in my electorate of Indi. As an example, a gentleman from Mount Beauty regularly needs chemotherapy in Melbourne. Angel Flight ensures his travel time is minimised and he is able to spend as many of his last days as possible at home in Mount Beauty.

The financial impact of implementing more bureaucratic measures would be catastrophic for this volunteer based organisation. Angel Flight is totally dependent on private donations and receives no government funding. I call on the CASA to reconsider this proposed change and find a way to ensure that Angel Flight can continue its important work.

**Fremantle Dockers**

**Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (16:11):** I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Fremantle Dockers on an outstanding 2014 AFL season.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall):** Thank you.

**Mr WYATT:** I want to acknowledge President Steve Harris and our CEO Steve Rosich for their leadership. To me it all seems that their season was cut prematurely short because of the number of serious injuries and a determined Port Adelaide. I would also like to bring to the attention of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the West Coast Eagles No. 1 supporter, just how much further up the ladder the Dockers were at the end of the 2014 season—top four as opposed to the Eagles unable to make it to the top eight.

Congratulations to Nat Fyfe who was awarded the AFL Players Association Most Valuable Player for the 2014 season. This is a high honour and well-deserved by Nat who has a bright future ahead of him. Equally to Pav and the team of the senior players, I want to thank you for a great season of sportsmanship. I was heartened to hear coach Ross Lyon promised a growing number of Fremantle fans that ‘the Dockers will rise again in 2015’. Ross and the coaching team led them well and will no doubt return with a renewed sense of purpose for the team next season. I take this opportunity to also commend the Fremantle fans. The Purple Haze game played in March this year raised over $150,000 for the Starlight Foundation.

On a personal note, I appreciate the tenacity, the unity and the fair play of the Dockers during the season. They have provided a wealth of entertainment and excitement for AFL followers all over Australia and especially for their devoted and passionate fans. I look forward with great expectations to their rise again in 2015. *(Time expired)*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I might point out—and other members would want me to do this—that the West Coast Eagles have won three premierships and the Dockers have won none.

**Helensburgh Public School: FIRST LEGO League Open European Championship**

**Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (16:13):** I want to take the opportunity to report to the House in the brief time that I have available a fantastic achievement by a local public school in my area, Helensburgh Public School's Komplete Kaos team made up of students who are at school currently. Andrew Christy, Harri Lahtinen, Jiah Pang, Marnie Parkinson, Matthew Wheatley, Max Hayes and Nicola Pang have competed in the international FIRST LEGO League Open European Championship in Pamplona, Spain.
The team won first place in the Innovative Solutions category with their flood warning app that they developed to assist people in flood emergencies. They were required to do a series of design tasks working with LEGO. There were 90 teams competing in the competition from 68 countries around the world. It was an absolutely outstanding achievement for a public school in the Illawarra to get together a team and to get community and school support. I really want to congratulate the students but I also, as I said at their special assembly last week, want to congratulate the parents and teachers who I know would have put so much effort not only into getting the students the opportunity to compete but also in supporting them in the cost of doing that. So it is a great, great achievement. Congratulations, and I look forward to bigger and better wins in the next international LEGO competition.

University of Queensland: Advanced Engineering Building

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (16:15): I was delighted to be asked to represent the Minister for Education to open the University of Queensland's Advanced Engineering Building, although I understand the rent-a-crowd protesters were a little disappointed. The innovative research to be undertaken there will boost three of Australia's most important industries: mining, construction and manufacturing. Supporting groundbreaking education in engineering will ensure that Australia remains globally competitive for generations to come. This state-of-the-art building will enable teaching research that is crucial for Australia's future. I believe the Advanced Engineering Building has the potential to rapidly improve productivity in industries that are not only important to Queensland but also important to our nation. It is an example of outstanding, innovative and sustainable engineering. The university should be proud of the five-star green rating achieved through the building design and it is no surprise that the building has won several Australian Institute of Architects, Queensland, awards.

As the member for Ryan I am incredibly proud that the University of Queensland is one of the leading universities in the world. I have no doubt that the teaching and research delivered by the Advanced Engineering Building will produce many outstanding graduates in the years to come and I look forward to hearing about their successes. With a new facility such as this, and by embracing the opportunities provided by the coalition government, I am confident that the University of Queensland will become one of the leading universities in the world.

Canberra Electorate: Tuggeranong United Football Club

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:16): If any members were in Canberra last Tuesday, they might have noticed that Canberra's Telstra Tower was glowing an unusual shade of green. Like the rest of Canberra, Telstra Tower had a severe case of Tuggeranong United fever. Last Tuesday, Tuggeranong United—or Tuggies—a team of students, public servants and tradies who train twice a week, took on, arguably, the best team in Australia: professional two-time A-League champions and a team packed with Socceroos, the Melbourne Victory. In front of a record crowd of 5,150 people at Viking stadium in Erindale, this was without a doubt the biggest game in Tuggeranong United's history. Lines were 100 metres long just to get into the ground to watch our part-timers take on the Victory's almost $3 million worth of professional talent. Tuggeranong United was brave and determined but, perhaps unsurprisingly, it was Melbourne who came out on top, winning 6-0 and progressing to the quarterfinals of the FFA Cup. But ask anyone who was there and they will tell you that the real winner on the night was football in Canberra. The game has reignited the calls for Canberra to start a new bid to join the A-League. Congratulations to Tuggeranong United.
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Football Club for your outstanding effort. Canberra is incredibly proud of you. I would also like to thank Telstra for showing its support for Tuggeranong United by lighting up the tower for this special game.

**East West Link**

**Mr SUKKAR** (Deakin) (16:18): I rise today to draw to the attention of the House the announcement by the Victorian Labor opposition of its intention to rip up contracts to build the East West Link should it win the state election. We know that the federal Labor Party opposes the East West Link and now state Labor has followed suit. Again, it demonstrates that Labor is only focused on shoring up a few inner-city seats against the Greens and not on what is good for Deakin residents in outer suburban areas like Ringwood, Croydon, Heathmont and Nunawading, just to name a few. In contrast, the federal coalition government has pledged $3 billion of funding for this project, highlighting our commitment to the East West Link. This project is also enthusiastically supported by the broader Deakin community including the Ringwood Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which provided unequivocal support for construction of the East West Link when it issued the following statement last week: 'The construction of the East West Link should proceed and at the earliest possible point.'

The East West Link is a vital piece of nation-building infrastructure for Victoria which will create 6,200 jobs and boost productivity. For Deakin residents it will take pressure off families by reducing traffic congestion and travel times, meaning more time at home with their families rather than sitting in traffic on the Eastern Freeway. Unlike Labor, I will continue to fight for the interests of the Deakin electorate and everyone in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne to make the East West Link a reality for our great state.

**Windale Health and Safety Expo**

**Ms HALL** (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:19): Last Wednesday, I attended the Windale Health and Safety Expo. It was run by WICA, a community group based in the suburb of Windale. Windale is a fairly socially disadvantaged suburb and the WICA group have worked hard to raise the level of community involvement and help the community come together. They have been very successful in doing that. To me, the highlight of the day was when the students from Windale Public School sang the national anthem both in the Awabakal language and in English. It really impressed everybody present that day. I would like to thank all the stallholders who came along and gave up their time. There was information on every aspect of community and government there for people to access. It was very rewarding for those people who came along. The information that was obtainable and the support that people received will continue to be available into the future. This is an annual event; it will happen again next year. Last year it was also very successful. I congratulate the WICA group on the fine day that they organised.

**Fiji: Election**

**Mr EWEN JONES** (Herbert) (16:21): It is with great pride that I stand here today to tell of the small part Australian parliamentarians played in the Fijian elections, the first free elections in that country for eight years. I start by thanking Julie Bishop, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, for asking me to join the team. I often speak of the role that Townsville can play in this region. If you draw a right-angled triangle using Townsville as the axis point, with
Papua New Guinea and Fiji at the other two points, in the 90-degree arc is the Melanesian world. That is a very, very important part of the world for our country, and Townsville will play an important role there. You do not get too many firsts in this life, so to witness the pride of the Fijian people as they lined up to vote was a truly great moment of my life.

I would like to pass on my thanks to the acting high commissioner, Glenn Miles, and to my personal shepherd from the high commission, Peter Lothian, for the time they took to ensure we were part of the process and did not get too lost. Special thanks must go to the band of highly skilled and dedicated Australian public servants who went over to Fiji and helped them develop a system of election which works for them. But the biggest thank you must surely go to the people of Fiji, who worked so hard to ensure this election was free and fair. The hours worked by the presiding officers and booth workers last Wednesday were huge and the responsibility they shouldered was great. To be there as they stood as a group at 7.25 am on election day and sang the national anthem is a moment I will never forget. Thank you for allowing me to witness your first election and return to democracy. Sola tale nima taha. (Time expired)

**Indi Electorate: Schools**

**Ms McGOWAN** (Indi) (16:22): As you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, schools in Indi have strong communities that take pride in providing the best possible learning environment for their students. The environment of teaching, nurturing and, most importantly, caring produces wonderful, well-rounded students. One example is the Dederang Primary School in the scenic Kiewa Valley. I want to thank the Dederang Primary School for inviting me to the fantastic fundraiser on Tuesday, 9 September. Congratulations on hosting the dinner. The drama of the storm could not outshine a terrific community event, the outstanding food and the wonderful company.

It was a privilege to sit with five students from Mount Beauty Secondary College, who were studying politics. We had a great conversation about politics in the world and I came away with a few good tips. Primary school students Angus McKillop and Bailey Jones gave me a rundown of the school family photo board, and Aidan Kirley and Ila Bowditch made excellent speeches. It was a pleasure also to chat with parents and teachers and it gave me a wonderful sense of how important that school is to the Dederang community. I would like to finish by congratulating principal Bronwen Martin, who did an excellent job, welfare worker Rachel Cosgriff, who did great work, Di Goonan and all the board and the community. You run a terrific school.

**Higgins Electorate: Chabad Malvern**

**Ms O'DWYER** (Higgins) (16:24): On Sunday, 14 September, I was pleased to visit Chabad Malvern for the dedication of its new purpose-built youth and early learning centre. Chabad Malvern has been wonderfully led by Rabbi Shimshon and Rivka Yurkowicz over the past 27 years. They have built a strong and supportive community within the Higgins electorate.

Chabad Malvern provides religious education, pastoral and social services to over 1,800 families in Malvern, Toorak, Armadale and surrounding suburbs. The opening of the new youth and early learning centre on Glenferrie Road adds to their existing synagogue. Chabad Malvern's Early Learning Centre has been running for more than 20 years and has helped to
nurture youngsters who are proud citizens of Australia while also developing their Jewishness to create strong and responsible members of our community. The new purpose-built centre, which started being used in January, provides cutting-edge indoor facilities and a playground for the younger members of the community. The modern facilities now combine perfectly with the warm and caring staff.

I know the community of Chabad Malvern is very thankful to the many donors to the wonderful new centre and especially to the three major local benefactors and residents within the Higgins electorate: the families of Solomon and Rosie Lew, Marc and Eva Besen, and Shaya and Ziva Kramer.

Finally, at this time I would also like to wish all members of the Jewish community a happy New Year. Shanah Tovah.

Illawarra Older Women's Network

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (16:25): On 8 September, I had the great joy of participating in a fifth birthday celebration. This fifth birthday celebration—as the member of Indi, I think, would appreciate—was for the Illawarra Older Women's Network, a fantastic group of women. Having passed the age of 50, I share great pleasure in participating in their activities wherever I can, and I have done for many years. But on this particular day they were celebrating the fifth birthday of their wellness centre project. I will use their own words to describe its purpose:

Social isolation is a threat to the well being and health of us all and as women tend of live longer than men, they are more likely to feel isolated. Being on a limited income further restricts many people and decreases our ability to lead full and productive lives. To enjoy healthy senior years our minds and bodies need to be active and we need to do all we can to ensure we foster a willingness to stay well by keeping active.

Their wellness centre offers a holistic approach to this task. It includes classes in tai chi, international dancing, drumming and ukulele, fitness and exercise, as well as yoga, relaxation and meditation. I would like to congratulate the ladies of the Illawarra Older Women's Network. May they roar long and loud.

Dobell Electorate: Wyong Creek Public School

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (16:27): Established in 1883 and nestled in the beautiful Yarramalong Valley, Wyong Creek Public School is a reminder of a simpler time, before urban development to the east of the M1. Home to 54 students, the school provides a nurturing environment, with a strong sense of belonging and pride amongst its students.

Upon my visit to Wyong Creek Public School I was greeted by the school's resident scarecrow, an entrant in this year's Yarramalong Valley Spring Festival. The scarecrow was designed and constructed by the students and positioned amongst a field of flowers bearing the faces of the students.

The highlight of my visit was meeting the students who were about to embark on a visit to Canberra. As I walked into the classroom, they were engaged in a session of mock parliament and were preparing for their trip. The students posed questions ranging from which member of the mock parliament occupied my seat to how many pieces of legislation had been passed by this parliament. I was happy to advise them the number is 109. During my visit, I also
presented a new Australian flag to the school as well as books from the Parliament Shop for the school library.

I would like to thank principal David Ireland and his wonderful team for welcoming me to their school and the students for their enthusiasm and their questions about federal parliament and Australia's system of government. I look forward to many more visits to Wyong Creek Public School and to hearing about the students' visit to Parliament House, which I believe took place last week—but, as parliament was not sitting, I was not able to meet them here. It is a great school and I wish them all the very best.

Canberra Electorate: Memory Walk & Jog
Canberra Electorate: Big Red Kidney Walk

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:28): Yesterday, on a glorious Canberra spring day, my runners got a big-time work-out and I was reminded again that I need to get new runners, as a result of the work-out they got. I had the opportunity yesterday morning of going on the Alzheimer's Australia Canberra Memory Walk & Jog. This walk has gone from strength to strength. It started with just 100 people a few years ago; yesterday, there were more than 450 registrants. Those participants raised $20,000 in funds for a really worthwhile cause that touches so many lives in our communities, including here in the Canberra community. It was great fun to take part in that walk.

An hour later I then donned another T-shirt and went off to the Canberra Big Red Kidney Walk. Thousands of Canberrans took part in a walk around the lake—again, a gorgeous spring day here in Canberra. Everyone was out and about around the lake. That was designed to raise awareness about the importance of kidney health. Anyone who has been to a dialysis unit would know the importance of kidney health. As a strong advocate of organ and tissue donation, I have been to a number of those units over the years. I met a woman, a Canberran, who had been on dialysis for seven years and has just had a transplant. She was there with her family and friends. It was great to see her out. Mr Deputy Speaker, please encourage all your constituents to give the gift of life and register as an organ and tissue donor.

Page Electorate: Schools

Mr HOGAN (Page) (16:30): Like for many, the last couple of weeks, or the last few days of last week, were very busy with year 12 graduation ceremonies around the state. I had the absolute privilege of going to the year 12 graduation ceremony at Woodlawn college. I congratulate Chris Comerford and all the staff on their great event, as well as Brother John at Trinity Catholic College. I went there the same day. The year 12 cohort had a lot of fun and had a great day as well. I then went to Southern Cross High School in Ballina. The principal, Peter, and his team put on a great display as well. My wife also represented me at her old school, Kadina High School in Goonellabah. She said that was a fantastic event and the enthusiasm of the staff there was infectious. She went to Casino High School for their year 12 graduation ceremony as well.

The commitment of the teachers at these events is fantastic. The enthusiasm of students at these events is infectious. I know that now is a busy time for our year 12 students. They have their exams coming up. I think they have two weeks holiday or study time at the moment. They come back for a week and then they get into the exams. I wish them all the best.
On Friday afternoon I dropped into Wollongbar primary school. I congratulate Lachlan, who won a book award that I gave out. He is a great kid. He won it for the great spirit that he shows in his school community.

Shortland Electorate: Swansea Chamber of Commerce

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:31): On Saturday, in beautiful Lake Macquarie, in the wonderful electorate of Shortland, on the shores of Lake Macquarie, Swansea Chamber of Commerce held their spring festival. I would like to congratulate Swansea Chamber of Commerce for organising the most spectacular day, both weather-wise and in events. The whole of the community turned out in Swansea. They walked along the foreshores. They sat on the side of the lake and watched the jet boats. They collected information, they attended the market stalls, they watched the entertainment and they enjoyed the food that was organised for the day. Swansea Chamber of Commerce really linked into what the community wanted, what the community needed. No. 1, of course, was a beautiful day and No. 2 was making sure that the information, the events and the day were structured in a way that the whole of the community could enjoy. The strength of this festival was that it brought everyone together. It had the support of all areas of the community. I really believe the Swansea Chamber of Commerce should be congratulated for the fine festival that they organised.

Swan Electorate: Greyhound Racing

Mr IRONS (Swan) (16:33): I have previously spoken in this place about my support for a joint local campaign in my electorate of Swan between Greyhounds WA, stakeholders and the community to gain appropriate funding and a lease agreement to keep their racing track at its iconic Cannington location. I am pleased to update the House about this campaign, which recently came to fruition when the Western Australian state government, via Racing and Wagering WA, answered their call for an additional $13 million in funding. I have worked with Greyhounds WA, Racing and Wagering WA and the Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association since 2008 to keep greyhound racing in Cannington.

At this time I made representations to the Western Australian Premier and the minister for sport to prevent greyhound racing being moved to a single venue in Mandurah, and to secure a new 30-year lease agreement with the landowners—the Canning Agricultural, Horticultural and Recreational Society—at the site of the old trotting training track behind the existing course. If the greyhounds had been moved to Mandurah, many thought that it would have seen the death of the greyhound industry in Western Australia. Despite the lease agreement being signed in July last year and $13 million in funding being granted by RWWA and WAGRA for the stage 1 works for the new facility, uncertainty had surrounded the track’s future, with funding for stage 2 works unable to secured. That would have spelled disaster but now we have the Western Australian state Liberal government giving the further $13 million required—and I congratulate them on their decision.

Prime7 50th Anniversary

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:35): Television in rural and regional Australia is much more than entertainment. It allows for connectivity, contact, information use, shared celebrations and shared tragedies—all through a local lens. The launch of Albury’s first TV station, AMV4—now known as Prime7—in September 1964 was celebrated on 10 September 2014 at
Albury at the '50 years of television on the border and in north-east Victoria' event. The company to operate Albury's first TV station, Albury-Upper Murray TV Ltd, was awarded its broadcasting licence in October 1962. Principal shareholders in the company included Amalgamated Wireless Australasia Ltd, Hoyts Theatres, the Border Morning Mail and other local businesses—complying with the requirement that at least 50 per cent of the company's shareholders be locally based.

In the mid-1980s, RVN-AMV became known on air as the Prime Network in a partnership with fellow regional stations. The Prime Network later became Prime Television as regional networks were preparing for the change to aggregation, with Prime aligning itself with the Seven Network for program supply. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ian Audsley, the CEO of Prime Media, and all the team in Albury and Canberra for the excellent job they do in promoting community and regional living.

Wright Electorate: Turning Canungra Pink

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Government Whip) (16:36): I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and praise one of my local communities in the light of their upcoming fundraising event. The township of Canungra is a small, rural and picturesque town situated 35 kilometres from the Gold Coast and on the western side of the base of Tambourine Mountain. This Wednesday, local radio station Breeze FM 88.9 and the Canungra Chamber of Commerce are hosting the Turning Canungra Pink event to raise funds for the Cancer Council of Queensland. A large community turnout is expected, many local businesses having pitched in to make it a success. Sadly I will be unable to be there due to parliamentary commitments, however I wanted to use this time in the House to congratulate the Canungra Chamber of Commerce and the broader community for its fine example of local philanthropy.

As the federal member, it is heartening to see the local community banding together for a good cause. It is equally pleasing to see an active and thriving local chamber of commerce. Recently I spoke at the neighbouring Beaudesert Chamber of Commerce, where I stressed the importance of local business success as a key contributor to our nation's long-term economic success. It is important to note the vital role that local chambers of commerce have in supporting local businesses. You cannot have one without the other. Again I commend the Canungra Chamber of Commerce, along with Breeze FM 88.9, on the positive event they have organised. I have no doubt it will be successful. (Time expired)

Canberra Electorate: Lions Youth Haven
Canberra Electorate: Galilee School

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:38): Last week I had the opportunity to go out to the beautiful Lions Youth Haven in Kambah, a suburb in my electorate. It is quite an open area and its views of the Brindabellas are just breathtaking. I went there twice in 24 hours, the first time to go and visit the new youth accommodation Lions have developed for students who come up here under the Parliamentary Education Office program for year 6 students. It was wonderful to see the accommodation they have developed. It has changed a lot since I went to youth camp. Gone are the days of sleeping bags. Apparently it is now all fluffy white doonas in fabulous white doona covers and wonderful starchy linen. It was a bit like the Hilton Hotel—very different from the camps I used to go on.
I also had the opportunity the next day to go to the Galilee School, which is a school for high-risk youth. They were unveiling a beautiful mural that the students had painted over the course of the last few months. Thanks very much to Geoff Filmer for guiding the creative work of those kids at risk. Giving them the opportunity to release some of their anger and their passion about issues through visual arts is incredibly useful. The piece was wonderful and compelling. Thank you, Galilee School, particularly to Priscilla and her team.

Petition: Telecommunications

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (16:39): I rise to present a petition from residents and businesspeople from the Kuranda-Speewah region highlighting the dire state of telecommunications in their region. This petition has 579 signatures and has been found to be in order by the Standing Committee on Petitions. The lead petitioner is my good friend Bob Madden, from Speewah, who has been on a long journey with me in our efforts to improve mobile phone reception. Kuranda still suffers from a very patchy and unreliable mobile phone coverage, mainly due to its very challenging physical terrain.

In addition, broadband internet delivery via Telstra ports is inadequate to meet the needs, forcing people to use satellite services. Unfortunately, either these services have been oversubscribed or the system is unable to deliver usable speeds. The result is that some residents describe their connections as being slower than dial-up. This is very frustrating and unacceptable and seriously impacts on students, businesses and people trying to work from home.

I support the petitioners in asking the Minister for Communications to undertake an analysis of mobile phone reception and broadband delivery throughout the Kuranda area. I have also advocated for Kuranda-Speewah to be included in the list of priority areas to be put forward for telcos seeking funding under the Mobile Black Spot Program. I now seek leave to table this petition.

Leave granted.

The petition read as follows—

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

This petition of the residents and business owners, principally of the Kuranda area of Far North Queensland, but also those outside the Kuranda area negatively affected by inferior communications with the Kuranda area. The Kuranda area is in the Federal Electorate of Leichhardt.

We draw to the attention of the House: That residents and business owners of the Kuranda area experience poor, to no mobile phone service in these various locations listed above. Speewah has no mobile phone reception. Broadband internet delivery is also of immensely inferior standard. Telstra does not provide adequate ports in the exchanges to meet the needs of residents. The alternative available to residents is to use satellite services such as Skymesh, Westnet and the interim service provided by NBNCo. However, these services have either been oversubscribed or the system is unable to deliver usable speeds, with the result that some residents describe their connection as being of slower speed than that of dial-up. NBNCo has plans for delivery of FTTN in some of the village and fixed wireless is to be located at Kuranda village, Kowrowa, Koah and Speewah. Lack of modern day telecommunications severely disadvantages business in the area.

We therefore ask the House to: request the Minister for Communications initiate, through his Department, an analysis of problems connected to mobile phone reception and broadband delivery
throughout the Kuranda area and to give urgent consideration to provision of practical solutions, including inclusion in funding through the Mobile Black Spot Programme.

from 579 citizens

Petition received.

Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:41): Thursday last week was national HIPPY week. I attended the HIPPY celebrations at Windale PCYC. It was a very positive experience. I have gone along and visited the HIPPY program on a number of occasions. HIPPY stands for Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters. It is about providing parents and children with an environment in which they can learn. It is about giving parents skills and the confidence they need to work with their young children in getting them ready for school. At Windale this program has been extremely successful. A number of the parents that have worked in a voluntary capacity at the group have gone on to find employment in that area. It is very seamless. It goes from the HIPPY program to the preschool program at the local school, and then from the local school's preschool program students are going to school itself. It is very strongly focused on the community. It is very strongly focused on providing skills and a supportive environment and enabling children to develop the techniques they need to learn once they attend school. I commend those people involved with the HIPPY program at Windale.

Gladstone-Rockhampton: Black Dog Ball

Mr O’DOWD (Flynn) (16:43): The 2014 Black Dog Ball, a major event for Gladstone-Rockhampton, will be held at the Paradise Lagoons on 11 October, raising awareness for mental health and wellbeing within the families in the agricultural sector of Central Queensland. It responds to graziers and farmers who may be undergoing hardship due to severe drought. I am pleased to report that it was raining in the area today. They are at risk of suicide. Of course, the rain does not bring dollars immediately. Last year they raised $13,000 for mental health. The training program is an initiative that will deliver applied suicide intervention skills training—ASIST—to members of the community who are likely to come into contact with families and individuals undergoing extreme hardship, such as bank staff, service providers, accounting staff et cetera. The funds raised will allow this training to be offered free of charge to members of the community who may lack the skills and/or the confidence to respond to their customers who may be in crisis. The Black Dog Ball coincides with Queensland Mental Health Week, which will be run on 5 to 12 October. Mental Health Week is an annual national awareness event conducted to coincide with rural Mental Health Day, which is 1 October this year.

Australian Student Prize: de Koning, Miss Olivia

Mr PORTER (Pearce) (16:44): On Thursday, 17 September I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Olivia de Koning, one of the 49 secondary school students within Western Australia and one of the 500 nationally to receive an Australian Student Prize of $2,000. These prizes recognised the academic excellence of secondary students across Australia during the 2013 school year.

Having met Olivia, she was a particularly deserving recipient. During the 2013 school year, Olivia managed to obtain outstanding results across all of her subjects, achieving an ATAR
result of 99.8, particularly excelling in maths and science, while still maintaining a balance by undertaking studies in English literature, politics, law and French.

Olivia has continued to pursue these interests in her tertiary studies, being currently enrolled at the University of Western Australia and completing her first semester of a Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours). This course will require her to undertake a number of research projects at various stages throughout the degree and will provide her with the opportunity to study abroad for six months at an associated university in France, which she hopes to do next year so as to advance her majors in French, and Law and Society. Upon completing her Bachelor of Philosophy, she intends to complete her Juris Doctor.

Through this award, the coalition government is supporting Olivia in her efforts to obtain this goal, because the government is committed to giving Australian students the best possible education. This is essential in order to ensure that students and high achievers, like Olivia, allow us to continue to remain competitive with our international economic partners by giving them the opportunities and assistance they deserve to pursue a high-quality further education. I strongly commend Olivia for her achievements to date and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Andrews): Order! In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Iraq and Syria

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Andrews) (16:46): Are there any statements?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (16:46): In addressing the question of Iraq and the extraordinary activities which we have seen carried out at the hands of the extremists of ISIL, I want to begin with history, taking us back a decade. In the wake of September 11, in the wake of the Bali bombings, in the wake of the Madrid bombing and in the wake of the London attacks, I remember the discussions in this House. On 30 March 2004 I said in relation to the extremist offshoot that was a perversion, an abasement and a rejection of the majestic religion of Islam that was the predecessor of ISIL, al-Qaeda—and who would ever have believed that the term 'less extreme' could ever be used in relation to al-Qaeda—had this world view:

… al-Qaeda is seeking to establish a Taliban-style Islamic caliphate across the world. That is its objective. It is a clear, 100-year vision and it is an objective which it seeks to bring about through jihad or holy war. There is no capacity to reason, talk or negotiate. Everything that we try is rejected. We are infidels in their mind, and so too are all of those moderate Islamic states which reject the notion of a Taliban-style globe. That is the situation we face today. The strategic objective of al-Qaeda is very clear. It is to bring down the core Islamic states of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Indonesia by destabilising them and breaking down the structures in those societies. In order to do that, it seeks to break down Western connections, to frighten away Western engagement, to break down resolve within those societies and to cause fragmentation.

Sadly, a decade later, those sentiments remain true. They have, however, been transferred from al-Qaeda—which remains a clear and present danger, a manifest international threat—to, extraordinarily, an even more barbaric and extreme psychopathic regime.
The world has a very dark side. We saw it in the last century at Tuol Sleng, outside of Phnom Penh in Cambodia, under the Khmer Rouge. It is highlighted at the Jewish Holocaust museum Yad Vashem and by the monument to the murdered Jews of Europe only a few hundred metres from the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. We are seeing a replay of that dark side today as genocide is carried out across the borders of northern Syria and northern Iraq through the activities of ISIL and their psychopathic regime that glories in human brutality. They use the weapon of modern mass communication to broadcast and display with an almost unimaginable malice the atrocities they have carried out. They then use the weapons of modern mass communication to broadcast and display, with a sense of malice that is almost unimaginable, the atrocities they carry out. We have seen, all too sadly, the beheadings and the crucifixions. We have seen the executions of Western journalists in the most medieval fashion. But these things are played out on a grand scale in relation to their own people.

The greatest victims of ISIL have of course been the Islamic people. For the most part it is Sunni on Shiah, but there is no compunction about Sunni-on-Sunni violence; there is no compunction about Sunni-on-Christian violence; there is no compunction about violence against Yazidis. There is no religious barrier to it; it is a totalitarian, authoritarian and genocidal regime. It is also a regime that is utterly at odds with the teachings of Islam. Women are treated as sex slaves. They are subject to the most horrendous crimes. There is a glory amongst the ISIL fighters in the degradation of all humans who are not one of their kind. There is no religious basis to this; it is an utter perversion of a great, grand, majestic world religion.

Against that background, I wanted to address where we are at now. Obviously, Australia, in my view, has to be part of an international coalition under the emerging right to protect, which is ensuring that genocide is simply not allowed to be carried out on our watch. But it is occurring now. Let us not gloss this over. We are witnessing an unfolding genocide. It is not yet on the scale of Cambodia or Rwanda or of what occurred in post-1948 China or in Stalinist Russia, but it is emerging towards the scale of what we saw in the former Yugoslavia, which was a catastrophic failure of Western will.

We see here that it is time for the world to intervene. I say that not just for reasons of national security, although they are of and in themselves sufficient to justify any action. I say this for reasons of simple, common, base humanity. I witnessed the activities in Rwanda. Shortly after the genocide there, I was present in Rwanda. I spent time as a chief election observer in Cambodia as that country was attempting to recover. I have lived in Israel and visited the monuments of Yad Vashem and other holocaust tributes as well as having seen Dachau and, only recently in Berlin, the recollections of this most profound of perhaps all the holocausts during the Second World War. This cannot be allowed to stand in the 21st century.

It is a deep, powerful responsibility. It is not without its risks. As a coalition not just of the West but, hopefully, of Middle Eastern states and others, we need to take action. These fighters are being drawn in by the prospect of virulent glory. They are being inspired by the ability to, with a sort of sick madness, project the atrocities to the world in the hope of attracting some and scaring others. This is the moment when the world stands up. This is something which on our watch we must be part of. We must do it, of course, in a sensitive way and a cautious way so as to protect our utterly indispensable, invaluable Australian men and women who serve.
But no mistake: there is nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. Everybody has tried to engage, but at times there are elements of hard security that are indispensable. In my view, as I wrote in March 2004 in an opinion piece in the Herald Sun, there are four steps that must be taken to discredit and defeat this extremist stream. Firstly, we need to encourage broadbased economic development, along with greater democratisation of wealth in the Islamic world. Secondly, we have to encourage and assist those who would teach tolerance in Islamic schools and communities rather than extremism. Thirdly, we have to engage in joint policing and intelligence, not just with the West but also with the predominantly Islamic states. And fourthly, there has to be a hard security answer. There is no way around it. You cannot negotiate, you cannot talk down, you cannot have sense prevail amongst those who are engaged in a genocidal, virulent, psychopathic cause. That means that there are risks, but let us be clear that the risks of inaction are far greater than the risks of action.

We have a duty to Australians to ensure that the security threats we have seen of recent days are addressed at source. We have a duty to the world to ensure that a movement that could cause immense damage is stopped. But we have a duty to the Christians, the Yazidis and the Sunni and Shiah of northern Iraq to take steps to protect them. (Time expired)

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (16:56): I rise to express my strong support for the Prime Minister's statement on Iraq. In security matters, of course, there are two key areas where good governments should focus: words and actions. Words matter because they shine a light on what we know to be true. By speaking plainly, we make it clear that we will not allow unconscionable acts to be swept under the carpet. Some things just have to be said so that barbarism cannot hide in the shadows. But actions matter even more, because without actions statements on security matters can become jarringly hollow. Our government has moved strongly to call the actions of ISIL for what they are. The evil perpetrated by this group ranks among the great horrors perpetrated by mankind. ISIL has committed indiscriminate mass murder. It has attempted to wipe out entire populations based on their ethnicity or religion. It has systematically subjected thousands of women to violence and sexual slavery. It has conducted depraved public exhibitions of murder designed to terrify and intimidate. Our Prime Minister has spoken strongly and forcefully against these horrific acts.

But we know that words on their own are not enough. We need to act to tackle this appalling terrorist army. We have done so. By providing humanitarian assistance to the Yazidi people during the siege of Mount Sinjar, we helped to save the lives of many people. Of course, the situation for the Yazidi people remains extremely difficult. But we know that the delivery of humanitarian supplies and air strikes by the United States allowed people to survive who would otherwise certainly have perished. We should be proud of that. As we move into a new phase in the conflict with ISIL, it is entirely right that Australia plays its part. It is not a Western coalition fighting ISIL; it is a coalition against evil. To not act would see ISIL expand its territory further, get access to more weapons—and potentially more sophisticated weapons—and give it a greater base from which to plan attacks around the world. No modern terrorist group has ever created such a record of destruction in such a short period of time. The speed of the advance of ISIL demonstrates that it will take substantial international commitment to stop it. We must be a part of that commitment. The tiny group of Australians who support ISIL are of course not reflective of any part of our society. We all
want to see the killing stop. The actions that the government is taking will mean that Australia plays its part in stopping the rise of this appalling group.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (16:59): I too would like to rise to support the Prime Minister's statement on Iraq and our action in the Middle East in this particular theatre of war. I have always had an interest in this region even as a young person. This area that we are talking about is the cradle of civilisation. This is the land of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers which was once considered to be the cradle of civilisation. This is the area of civilisation back in history where the great city of Babylon was between the two great rivers. This was the city of Nebuchadnezzar, one of the great kings of our historic past. So this region has been an area that the world has focused on for many civilisations.

However, the problem with this region is that it has always been divided along either ethnic or religious lines. These ethnic and religious lines are the reasons why the various groups have always been at war or had tensions with each other. In contemporary eras we now talk about the fact that both the Sunni and Shiah Muslims are bitterly opposed to each other. It always makes me wonder that somebody who is a follower of one particular religion can allow themselves to be so bitterly opposed to another because of what is deemed to be a reasonably small inflection in the interpretation of that religion. As we know, this comes from some of the teachings in the Koran. We are not just isolating this to the Muslim religion. We have seen atrocities in Northern Ireland between the religious forces, between the Catholics and the Protestants. So we are not just talking about one group of religious supporters and another. This is not anti-Muslim. This is about people who have decided to become barbaric and destabilise not only that part of the Middle East and that part of the world but the world in general.

It is not in any way surprising that this destabilisation also flowed from a number of other factors. We recall the Arab Spring of several years ago starting in Tunisia, and then in Egypt which is still going through upheavals as a result. We know that eventually Syria became part of the Arab uprising and under the Assad regime this marked the genesis of this ISIL campaign. The Assad family have been ruling Syria for many years, sometimes brutally. The regime has certainly been warlike to its neighbours and the Assad family have ruled Syria with an iron fist. They are from a minority group within Syria. Eventually the majority of the Syrians rose up and said that they wanted a regime change. We have seen now the so-called freedom fighters—or the terrorists, depending on which side of the ledger you come from—in Syria fighting. We have seen some pretty brutal things in Syria, where accusations have been made that the Syrian regime gassed its own people—a horrific thing to do to your own people.

We know that we were in Iraq with the former coalition to stop Saddam Hussein. That was about regime change and we could commentate on that all day. It is my belief that we and the Americans left Iraq too early and that is one of the reasons why Iraq is in the situation it is, because they needed a leader who would heal Iraq, not cause further divisions. Because of the strong conflict between the Sunnis and the Shiah, we have the situation where the Shiah under Nouri al-Maliki did not go out of their way to be inclusive and the Sunnis now under a number of clerics have risen up. Thank goodness there has been a change in leadership just recently, because now there is a move towards trying to bring the two groups together.
However, this situation has created a climate for ISIL to flourish. We have seen some horrific things which every other speaker has spoken about. But to try to be as barbaric as they have been is an obvious strategy. We have seen the beheading of James Foley, a US journalist. We have seen the beheading of Steven Sotloff, an Israeli-US journalist. We now see David Haines, a British aid worker, has been executed, and another aid worker is about to be executed if you listen to their websites and their public announcements. Peter Neumann, a security expert, says:

ISIS looks at this as a low-cost strategy—
these beheadings.

They are seeing that in order to capture the world's attention and recruit people, they no longer need to take down the World Trade Towers or hit the Pentagon.

These beheadings get the same sort of attention, and they have.

The problem with this is that there is genocide. There is a distinct move towards trying to rid themselves of anyone who is not part of their fanatical group, and it is much based upon religious lines—fanatical religious lines. The true Muslim faith does not preach this sort of hatred, but we saw for example, just recently on Mount Sinjar, ISIS besieging 40,000 Yazidis and demanding that every one of them be killed unless they converted to their Muslim faith.

Thank goodness that the Kurdish helped break these lines and that we have now supported—along with some of the other partners that are being put together, led by the United States—not only food drops but bombings that stopped this absolute wipe-out of one small group of people.

So we are beholden, as a responsible nation in this world, to see that movements like this do not continue. They are well resourced because, as I said, of the breakdown in Iraq where the Iraqi army, which was left with a massive arsenal of weapons and machinery, just run away from it when they came along. This is an army that some people say has 20,000 people. Others estimate it could be 50,000 people. That is going to be the magnitude of the commitment. Well, Australians are very good at what they do, and we are joining this coalition to stop ISIS in its tracks. It will not be easy. It will not happen overnight. But we owe it to the freedom of the rest of the world. And everyone here previous to me has quoted Edmund Burke, so I will not do it again, but it is true that evil prospers when good men do nothing.

The Australian troops that will be going over there are brave men and women that are going to make a difference. We should make a difference to people who want to live in freedom and who want to live without persecution, and we need to help show them a better way. So, obviously, I support the Prime Minister's statement.

Ms O’Dwyer (Higgins) (17:08): I rise today to support the government's position in relation to the ongoing situation in Iraq. As events over past months, and as recently as last week, have shown, we are living in an age where the peace and security of individuals is being threatened in Iraq, here in Australia and around the world. This extremist threat is not new but has been around for decades, most acutely highlighted by the al-Qaeda attack on the twin towers in 2001, which killed 10 Australians, and the Bali bombings of 2002, when 88 Australians were brutally murdered by al-Qaeda linked terrorists. As a result of the United States led coalition actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, together with the vital work of our
security services, thankfully we have been spared further related terrorist atrocities here in Australia.

While the threat has not gone away, with the increasing instability in Syria over recent years and a fledgling democratic government in Iraq, ISIL have separated from al-Qaeda and become the predominant threat to individuals not part of their stream of Islam and to nations around the world. ISIL, by conquering large tracts of land both in eastern Syria and northern and western Iraq, have built up a wealth of capital from oilfields, together with funds raised from kidnappings, piracy and wealthy supporters around-the-world. When matched with their ultraviolent jihadist tendencies and a commitment to the world domination of an Islamic caliphate, ISIL are a danger which we cannot ignore.

We have seen over recent months the images of beheadings, possible genocide of non-Islamic groups in Iraq, rape and forced marriages, in addition to mass executions by ISIL. As the events of last week are likely to show, ISIL is not only a danger to peace in the Middle East but also intent on threatening the safety and peace of Australia and the Western world.

I look back to the al-Qaeda attacks of the early 2000s. Al-Qaeda were able to launch attacks on the Western world by taking control of Afghanistan, together with the Taliban. As was notably seen with the attacks in London, al-Qaeda were then able to use Afghanistan as a training base for their leading terrorists, who were able to return to their home countries, where, together with a small number of radicalised individuals, they were able to then carry out mass atrocities.

It is clear that ISIL are now following a similar model but with the added help of social media and an increased speed of communications to aid their murderous terrorist intentions and to spread fear. This is therefore a threat that we as a government have to take seriously, both to defend the freedoms of Australia and to protect the liberty and security of individuals around the world threatened by ISIL. The only way to defeat radical extremists is to oppose them and to join forces with like-minded nations and groups to defeat them. While this is a fight that will not be easy to win, action is required to make the world and Australia safer over the long term.

The United States has been building up a coalition of nations to oppose ISIL. Last week's debate in the Security Council, initiated by Secretary of State John Kerry, demonstrated unambiguous support from around the world to support the new elected Iraqi government in its fight against ISIL. Indeed, I understand that Australia is one of more than 40 nations that have indicated their support for the elected Iraqi government in its fight for survival against ISIL. As a nation with a strong military arm but also, sadly, a nation which has around 100 citizens who have decided to join with the murderous ISIL group, it is important that Australia is prepared to deploy aircraft and special forces to the effort to fight ISIL and support the democratic government in Iraq.

Alongside the military effort, it is also important to provide humanitarian relief. Australia has already contributed to the international airdrop effort in northern Iraq, committed in June to a $5 million aid package and offered to resettle 4,400 Iraqis and Syrians fleeing the violence who are now eligible for special humanitarian visas. In addition, last week the foreign minister also committed a further $2 million to the United Nations Population Fund specifically to provide reproductive and health support services to women and girls who have been brutalised by ISIL.
This is a fight which does require a strong and united coalition to fight against terrorists and extremists. It has also seen support from many Middle Eastern countries and from others, including France, through air strikes. This united and strong action will need to be confirmed again later this week at the UN Security Council, chaired by President Obama, so that, alongside humanitarian and military intervention, we can starve ISIL of fighters, arms, ammunitions and funds. This is an effort that will not be easy or short. Sadly, it may even encourage some terrorists to use it as an excuse to commit further atrocities—not that they have needed this excuse in the past to commence such action. But it is an effort that is required because we are facing a terrorist group which hates us, hates Western freedoms and hates anyone who does not want to live as it lives. We therefore need to continue to stand up to ensure that we can live in a peaceful and pluralist democracy.

I commend the government’s actions and thank those serving in the armed forces, together with their families, for their service. This is a difficult time for us as a nation. At such time, it behoves us all—particularly members of this place and other community leaders—to remain calm and considered in our approach to the recent increase in the terror alert and in events both abroad and here at home. At such a time, community debate remains important. We should not shy away from discussing important issues of national security even though they may be difficult and confronting. Every community leader should seek out the facts and act to chart a path through present uncertainties together and with respect.

I reiterate that recent concerns about our own safety are about crime and not about religion. No-one is above the law in this country. Everyone in this country has the right to live their own lives within the rule of law, free to practise their religion and free from persecution. Common sense informs us that no group within our community is homogeneous. Australian society is made up of many diverse groupings of people who, in turn, form communities and our nation. Those who stand up for the rule of law and human decency should always be applauded. We should recognise those people who draw on our common values, underpinned by our nation’s laws, to bring people together and who clearly label evil where they see it.

I commend prominent Muslim advocate Dr Jamal Rifi for his comments reported over the weekend where he said that the Muslim community, the broader Australian community and the federal government are on one side and extremism and racism are on the other. He rightly noted that anyone who feels that they have been improperly dealt with by the police are able to make a formal complaint, as in Australia our police must act within the law. In his work bringing Australians together, such as at the barbecue in Lakemba on 15 September—which I note was attended by Hon. Scott Morrison, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection—Dr Rifi deserves our full support.

However, those that seek to divide us, or indeed undermine our way of life, should resolutely be condemned. We should never be silenced from speaking against what is wrong. Individuals, in some cases self-appointed, or organisations which promote or condone hatred and violence against innocents can never be tolerated. If, in the face of the threat from such groups, we lose our nerve to out evil, then those who do not value our free society will have their victory and we will have been silenced into submission. I am gravely concerned by the claims made by Mr Uthman Badar, the face of Hizb ut-Tahrir, that the recent raids in Sydney and Brisbane are apparently in his mind an example of the police targeting Muslims as scapegoats. Worse still, Mr Badar uses this sensitive time to fan the flames of unrest amongst
Muslim people, to actively promote distrust in police and our laws and, in so doing, in our
democratic system of government. In doing so, he encourages division between Australians
both in the Muslim and broader Australian community.

What does Mr Badar hope to achieve by promoting disaffection in Muslim Australia? I
suspect it is power. However, power is just the mechanism to promote principles. And what
are the principles that he holds dear? Mr Badar refuses to either condemn the murderous cult
of ISIL nor discourage young Australians from travelling to Iraq or Syria to join forces with
it. Let us be clear. These people are terrorists. They murder innocent people: Iraqis and
Syrians. They murder people for being foreign journalists or bringing aid. They do this in the
most barbaric manner and then broadcast their act to the world to give added power and
potency to their crime. They stand for the exultation of death rather than the preciousness of
life. They stand for power by might and fear rather than that derived from those
democratically appointed by the people and the rule of law. In short they are an extremist cult
defined by the loose notion of that which they oppose. They have shown no limits in what
they will do in pursuit of power. Every Australian—every human being—should hold them in
the strongest condemnation.

The Prime Minister in his statements and actions has outlined a responsible path, one that
unites us as a nation and one that safeguards our citizens. I commend the Prime Minister's
statement to the House. Our freedoms are precious. We should do all that we can to defend
them.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (17:19): In his autobiography, former CIA boss George Tenet
provides an insight into life in the Middle East from one of the strongmen who subjected tens
of thousands of his citizens to cruelty and brutality on what can rightly be described as an
industrial scale. The former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, under interrogation after his
capture by US troops, reluctantly admitted his country did not have a stockpile of chemical
and biological weapons or weapons of mass destruction—a key factor behind the coalition of
the willing's invasion of his country in March 2003. 'It is a tough neighbourhood', Tenet
quotes Saddam as saying. Saddam was more concerned about how Iran, the country against
which he waged a bloody, decade-long war during the 1980s, would respond if it learnt Iraq
in fact did not have weapons of mass destruction.

Over the past few months, life in Iraq for up to seven million people has gotten a lot
tougher of course. The capture by ISIL of towns and cities in Syria and Iraq, and the appalling
human toll this has wreaked, is a tragedy of global proportions. Revelling under its black flag,
and even blacker heart, ISIL is creating an abattoir where the demented fantasies of thousands
of seriously evil individuals are playing out in the name of religion. No religion, no god,
would ever condone the sort of violence that is currently underway in the territory currently
under ISIL's control.

For civilised people not to respond to the barbaric actions that have been reported over
recent months would be a grave and unforgiveable failure of responsibility. It is for this
reason that I very much support the Prime Minister's clear-minded resolve and determination
to support the United States and approximately 50 other nations who have committed to
degrade and destroy ISIL. The Greens say they fear our involvement and that it would lead to
a quagmire, but avoidance and appeasement surely is not the answer.
Former United States President Bill Clinton cited as a significant foreign policy failure his hesitation at involving America in the atrocities being played out between feuding tribes in Rwanda in the 1990s. The President had earlier been burnt by the death of United States military personnel in Somalia and was extremely reluctant to become involved in another ill-fated conflict in Africa. The President blinked and millions died.

Appeasement against psychopaths has a long history of failure. For the civilised world to adopt a similar position with ISIL would be dangerous. These people will not stop in Iraq and Syria. Given half a chance they would spread their poison throughout the entire Islamic world. But to charge in with all guns blazing would also be a mistake. The global coalition that has rallied behind the United States is developing a considered approach to dealing with this regime of terror that shows complete and utter disregard for human life.

I will briefly focus on two aspects of ISIL’s horror regime, but there are many more that could be picked out. I was sickened to read recently about the fate of potentially thousands of women, Muslim and Christian, who are being held by Islamic State fighters and are being sold off as brides against their will. These women and the children at the centre of the storm are innocents who should be front and centre in the minds of those who criticise the large body of opinion in support of trying to put an end to this horror.

The very public executions of two foreign journalists and an aid worker over recent weeks have been designed to drive a wedge between Western governments and their people—a horrible bargaining chip that is as vile as it is shocking. But an unintended consequence is that it could also stem the flow of information out of the territories currently occupied by ISIL, which would allow these people to carry out their abhorrent cruelty out of sight of the rest of the world. My thoughts are with those journalists and others who have provided a flow of information out of Iraq and Syria and who are now in the clutches of the ISIL barbarians.

Even in the few short weeks since the Prime Minister delivered his opening address in the Iraq motion, the grounds have shifted substantially. While I wholeheartedly support the position that the government has taken in response to the Islamic State, the caliphate, and the innocent millions at the centre of this madness, I also support moves this government is making to ensure and secure innocent Australians here at home.

Last week's revelations of an ISIL-inspired terror plot to decapitate an innocent Australian makes me feel sick to the core. That there are people in our community who are prepared to exhibit such disregard for human life has nothing to do with religion. These people are nothing more than criminals and they should be and will be treated as criminals. I say to these people, 'When you are identified by our security agencies and when you are captured by our police forces, you will pay the price that your mindset and actions so richly deserve.'

In Darwin and Palmerston our diverse ethnic community is at the heart of a tight-knit social fabric that binds us together. One of the greatest pleasures of my job is the citizenship ceremonies I conduct each month which give me the privilege of being able to meet with and talk to the people from a range of backgrounds who choose to make the Territory home—those who come here to join us, not to change us. The pleasure these people have in becoming citizens is for me very touching and extremely rewarding. These people are welcomed and embraced by our country.
The malcontents and ingrates pictured on the front pages of Australian newspapers last week are trash who lack the courage and capacity to become valuable citizens of this great country. They are scum and should be treated as such.

While it is extremely sad that Australia is again taking up a defensive position in Iraq, I am heartened by the recent elevation of a more conciliatory and inclusive leadership in that country, which I hope will bring all of its citizens together. Defence Force representatives from the electorate of Solomon played key roles in the battle to liberate Iraq and then began the reconstruction after the 2003 ousting of the Saddam Hussein regime.

I am sure I speak for all those Australians who served in the Middle East on that occasion in saying that the path to unity can again be rebuilt. Only a unified position will put an end to what is going on in the Middle East, and I commend the steps taken by the Prime Minister and by Foreign Minister Julie Bishop in playing a lead role on the world stage in combating this evil.

**BUSINESS**

**Rearrangement**

**Mrs SUDMALIS** (Gilmore) (17:26): by leave—I move:

That orders of the day Nos 1, 2 and 3, committee and delegation business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

**COMMITTEES**

**Constitutional Recognition of ATSIP**

**Report**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House take note of the report.

**Mr STEPHEN JONES** (Throsby) (17:27): Deputy Speaker Porter, can I say at the outset how pleased I am that you are in the chair, being a member of this committee and somebody who I have enjoyed an interlocution with over the subject matters of this report. As you know, all of those members of the 44th Parliament who represent a major party were elected on a platform which included the bipartisan proposition that it is now time to recognise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their language, cultures and unbroken connection to land, in the founding document of our Commonwealth—that is, our Constitution.

I cannot improve on the words of my friend and colleague Senator Nova Peris, who explained that in this act of recognition we do not ask that Australians relinquish 200 years of settlement and that history, but rather we join to that over 40,000 years of continuous Aboriginal history. Nova is a renowned Australian and the first Aboriginal woman to be elected to our federal parliament. She is a powerful advocate and tells a poignant personal story on the importance of recognition. Nova is the first Indigenous woman to be elected to the Australian Senate.

As you would know, it took over 70 years from the time of Federation for the first Aboriginal Australian to enter the federal parliament as a member of this place. On 8
September 1971, that first Aboriginal Australian to take up a seat, Senator Neville Bonner, made his first speech to parliament. In that speech he made the following observation:

Less than 200 years ago the white man came, I say now in all sincerity that my people were shot, poisoned, hanged and broken in spirit until they became refugees in their own land. But that is history and we take care now of the present while, I should hope, we look to the future. Following the advent of the white man came a transitional period which still exists today. Then began to appear the emotional scars; the psychological wounds became a torment from which by and large we have still not recovered.

That was in 1971 and it is well known to most members in this place that we have still not completed the task of reconciliation. Those wounds have still not been healed. I have chosen Neville Bonner because he was the first Aboriginal senator in this place. I could equally have quoted from scores and scores of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have told their story in very moving ways about the impact that settlement has had, the impact of dispossession and the impact on our first peoples’ cultures, their livelihood and their psyche. I was very moved when I again read the 2008 contribution of Galarrwuy Yunupingu, who spoke of the fact that he has met and discussed this issue with every Australian Prime Minister from Gough Whitlam to the present, and how it is his deep concern that we resolve this issue of constitutional recognition.

The simple objective of recognition is slightly more complicated when we attend our focus to the text of the Constitution. It is a resilient document which has been interpreted flexibly over the past 114 years, but there are some sections which cannot be reinterpreted as anything other than racist in their intent. Section 25 is one such section. It contemplates the race-based exclusion of people from the electoral roll for state or federal elections. It is inconceivable that we might address the subject of recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples without addressing this racist remnant within our Constitution. As the report states, there is clear agreement on the removal of this clause.

The second issue that we need to attend to is a clear statement of recognition, and in this the obvious task has been aided by the work of the expert panel who have handed down a report which the JSC has had the benefit of relying upon. There are forms of words within there, and within the interim report of the JSC, which I think all parliamentarians can attend their mind to and around which we will find agreement.

That is the first two of three tasks that need to be completed in the act of recognition, the first being the removal of racist clauses and the second being the inclusion of a statement of recognition. But the expert panel recommended—and I agree—that we need to do one further thing. I argue that we need to go further and include within the proposition to be put before the Australian people a clause which would prohibit henceforth the Commonwealth parliament from passing legislation which discriminates against people on the basis of their race. I argue that the members of the government and their supporters within the community should support this constitutional protection against discrimination, and I believe that it is entirely consistent with liberal and conservative philosophy. A failure to do that—to support the protection of this right—is a denial of fundamental liberal values, the first of which—which those on the conservative side of politics have long held dear—goes to the primacy of the rights of individuals. Governments, it is argued, should only do what individuals cannot do and should tread warily when interfering with the rights of individuals that are recognised by all civil societies. Liberals have long imagined a society built upon the primacy of those
rights of individuals—the rights to property untrammelled by interference from government, the rights of freedom of speech and the right of freedom against arbitrary detention without trial. Our Constitution protects some of these but not all of them. I also argue that the protection against discrimination on the basis of race is one of these rights that liberals have always championed.

The second reason I argue that this is consistent with liberal philosophy goes to a consistent thread of liberalism from the founding of the Liberal Party and the conservative parties to this date—that is, the fact that there should be reasonable restraints upon governmental power. No government and no parliament should have unlimited power to legislate in ways that interfere with the liberties of its citizens. This is a point that is made with special force in societies that have sought to federate their governmental powers as a check and balance against central government. The constraints are underpinned by social norms, by democratic representation and by the rule of law—but, importantly, these powers should also be constrained by that constitutional protection against those forms of discrimination that I contemplate.

The third point is this: the protection of the rights of the minority against the majority. Whether it is in the field of workplace relations, in business or in public debate, liberals and conservatives have always sought to guard against the tyranny of majoritarian rule. It is why our founding fathers created a Senate and gave small states equal representation of senators to the larger states; it is why our Constitution contains numerous protections that were created out of concerns that the larger states would dominate the smaller ones; and it is why, in classic conservative philosophy, there is an emphasis on restraining the power of the strong against the weak.

I argue that a further protection should be the protection of individuals of a particular race, whether they are a majority or a minority, against discrimination. It is no answer to this to say that those protections should be maintained by the popular vote and through the democratic process of representative government. It is why a true liberal and a true conservative should be attracted to the notion that the right of an individual should not be determined by their race, no matter whether that individual is a part of an overwhelming majority or a tiny minority. Some may argue, and they have, that this right is already protected by federal laws—and this is true—but the fact is that the federal law does not constrain the federal parliament, as this change would contemplate. I argue simply this: those who argue that the federal parliament should be able to discriminate against people on the basis of race have an onus upon them to explain why that should be so.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (17:37): I rise today to welcome the interim report of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, tabled in June this year, and to welcome this opportunity to make a few brief comments on that report. Whilst not a sitting member of the committee, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the members of the committee for their work in the preparation of this interim report and to also commend the earlier work of members of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, which was formed back in 2010. I acknowledge and thank the 30 individuals and organisations who have made valuable submissions to the joint select committee and recognise the tens of thousands of Australians, right across the nation, who are actively contributing to the ongoing task of constitutional recognition. I understand that some 185,000 Australians have now signed a
pledge on the Recognise Australia website, and indeed many more community and social networks have been activated around this issue.

The submissions to the expert panel were part of an extensive process of community consultation. The expert panel travelled to some 85 different communities across Australia, covering rural, remote and metro regions, and received more than 3,500 submissions—which suggests that this is definitely an issue touching deeply into the lives of many Australian citizens.

Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution is well overdue. It is a historical oversight, or indeed a historical wrong, that must be made right. I stand firmly with Labor in the belief that the sooner our Constitution gives recognition to our first peoples the better. Labor is committed to pursuing meaningful change in the Constitution, change that unites the nation and reflects the hopes, dreams and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We know that multiparty support is critical for any referendum proposal to be successful, and as such Labor is working constructively with the government through the joint committee to make sure there is a political consensus on the content of a proposal to be put to the Australian public. Australia of course does not have a very good track record of voting yes in referendums, with only 8 out of 44 referendums delivering a successful outcome. So the joint committee's interim report is extremely important, and I know that its work has been based, as it should be, on the 2012 report from the expert panel on constitutional recognition. The committee's role is to secure strong, multipartisan support around the timing, specific content and wording of the referendum proposals that were effectively outlined by the expert panel in their report.

The expert panel, co-chaired by Mr Mark Leibler AC and Professor Patrick Dobson, made four major recommendations. The first one recommends deleting section 25 of the Constitution, which of course permitted states to disqualify people from voting on the basis of race, and section 51(xxvi), which allows the Commonwealth to make laws on the basis of race. The panel also recommended adding a new section 51A, 'Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples', that recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first occupants of Australia, acknowledges the continuing relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with their traditional lands and waters, respects the continuing cultures, languages and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and acknowledges the need to secure the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The expert panel also recommended adding a new section,116A, which would effectively prohibit any racial discrimination. It says that governments should not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic or national origin.

This new section, I suggest, is absolutely critical. It is more than reasonable to think that a modern democracy like ours should have a constitution that provides a guarantee against racial discrimination. Indeed, there is a very clear and compelling logic to how these proposals fit together in terms of granting constitutional recognition whilst at the same time guaranteeing no discrimination against any citizen. The argument is that these are two sides of the one coin, that you cannot have meaningful recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our Constitution if, on the other hand, you continue to enable laws that will be racially discriminatory. There is also a proposal for an additional section 127A, which
is about the recognition of languages. Whilst recognising English as the national language of Australia, this section notes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages were indeed the original Australian languages and are an important part of our national heritage.

To build the momentum needed for a successful constitutional change, a bill for an act of recognition to acknowledge the unique place of Australia’s first peoples was passed with unanimous support through this parliament on 12 March 2013. Importantly, this act contained a sunset clause to ensure that this matter is progressed by parliament within two years, with that end date being March 2015. The previous Labor government invested some $10 million into helping build public awareness and community support for change. This important work is being led expertly by Reconciliation Australia via their RECOGNISE Australia campaign. I certainly hope that the joint select committee will consider, very closely, requests for additional and greater resourcing for public awareness campaigns as we get closer to the timing of a referendum. If this government is serious about constitutional recognition and the success of a referendum on the matter then this additional financial support for community education initiatives will be vital.

I would like to close now with words from the late Dr Yunupingu, Yothu Yindi’s songwriter and lead singer, who leaves an enormous legacy and example for us all to respect and follow. Dr Yunupingu strongly believed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be recognised in our nation’s founding document. He said:

I want all Australians from all backgrounds, coming together for a better tomorrow. And I believe the time for change is now. So it’s time for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to be formally recognised by the Constitution. It’s the right and decent thing to do. Please give us your support.

The current multi-party support and growing community support for constitutional recognition does in fact offer us a historic opportunity to acknowledge the unique status of our first peoples and to remove those discriminatory provisions from our Constitution. The Australian Constitution is the founding document of our Federation, for our laws and for our government, but it is silent on the special place of Aboriginal people in this country, except of course to give implicit endorsement of discrimination in sections 25 and 51(xxvi).

Here we stand some 113 years later, with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address this silence—to make amends for this greatest piece of unfinished business on our nation's books. As Professor Patrick Dodson noted this year in his Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration:

Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people goes to the heart of what type of nation we want to be—Are we people that shrinks from the uncomfortable truth of the past? Or a nation that is mature and capable enough to address a wrong and make our Constitution something we and the next generation can take pride in.

Opportunities to change the constitution come rarely. Labor believes the sooner our Constitution gives recognition to our first peoples the better. It is time to put an end to the constitutional exclusion of Aboriginal people from the national polity.

Debate adjourned.
Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (17:48): As a member of the committee, I would like to commend the report to the House and, in doing so, say that the NDIS is landmark legislation. The program that has been rolled out as a result of the legislation and as a result of the scheme is a program that has the ability to make enormous changes in the lives of Australians that are living with disabilities. It is long overdue, and it arose out of the Productivity Commission report. I would like to pay particular credit to Jenny Macklin for the work that she did in establishing the National Disability Insurance Scheme and bringing this program, this plan, this life-changing legislation to fruition.

This report raises issues around the implementation. It is the first report of the committee that actually looks at how the scheme has been rolled out in different jurisdictions.

It looks at how the NDIA is operating in the four trial sites, which are Barwon, Newcastle, Adelaide and Tasmania. Each of those sites has a different client group. Barwon is looking at the rollout according to programs; Tasmania is in the 15 to 24 age group; Adelaide is according to the zero-to-five age group; and in New South Wales, in the Hunter, it is based on local government areas. The NDIS was rolled out first in Newcastle local government area, and the programs that have been offered to people are life-changing. In New South Wales, the biggest problem that I have encountered is the fact that the state government’s enabling legislation led to the privatisation of services within that state and the closing of a residential facility within the Hunter. It really had nothing to do with the actual NDIS, but it has muddied the waters a little.

Putting that aside, the commitment of the staff in the Hunter has been phenomenal. There has been a development of a culture, an improvement in the culture. The organisation actually had to establish a culture of its own. People working for the agency throughout Australia came from varied backgrounds. They had to transition to seeing themselves as staff of the NDIS, providing programs to people along the lines of the guidelines for the NDIS. There were issues that were raised at each of the sites and there were recommendations made—and I will touch on those recommendations in one moment. But the different client groups tended to lead to different issues in different areas. I think that this rollout, being done in the way that has been done, really gives us the ability to look at the kinds of challenges that will arise in those different age groups.

The zero-to-five age group are young children who have had early identification of a disability and then work with programs that are going to be with them for their life. Tasmania has a totally different model to delivering services to that in other states. Baptcare has been operating there as the gatekeeper for disability services for some time and the model worked and fitted in very well there. In New South Wales, we had the state government providing services and the federal government providing services. ADHC service provision is being rolled over gradually to the NDIA and the NDIS.

One of the first issues that has been identified is the need for this program to continue to be rolled out and to be delivered on time. Any blow-out in the implementation would cause
extreme hardship for people and would be detrimental to the scheme. I fully support the original time frames that are in place for the rollout of the NDIS, and I do support the recommendations here. Issues such as NDIS plans that have not been activated and gaps in services that were brought up and covered by this first report are being revisited, and will be reported on in 2015.

The committee understands that there is a need to help the participants and a need for the NDIA to develop the skills in their staff that will lead to a seamless implementation of the scheme. Issues such as differences between the types of plans that were offered and the variability of planners has been addressed, recognised and emphasised as far as the training of planners is concerned. The committee also noted the important role of advocacy services in ensuring that quality plans are supported by participants. There really is a need for advocacy and for the participants to truly understand what the plans are about and the services that are available, as well as their responsibilities and the responsibilities of the providers.

Two issues that will be encountered as we move forward are around housing and the workforce. There is going to be a need for a greater workforce. There is going to be a shortfall in the number of workers in the disability sector, particularly in the professional roles, and that is detailed in recommendation 16. I worked in a disability area—it is on my LinkedIn page—and organisations have contacted me offering me work. I actually think that anyone that had me as a case manager or working with them would be having somebody whose skills are well and truly outdated. However, it shows that there is that shortage and that organisations that are providing the services are looking for people to work.

There are also issues around Indigenous communities. I do not think Indigenous committees have been fully embraced and covered. More work needs to be done there. Overall, the committee found that there is a commitment from everybody involved—from the body overseeing the NDIS implementation, the committee and the council to the workers in the organisation. There is bipartisan support. We want to see the NDIS succeed. We want to see the benefit that it can deliver to people living with disabilities.

Debate adjourned.

Treaties Committee
Report

Debate resumed on the motion:
That the House take note of the report.

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (17:58): I would like to thank both the committee secretariat and the deputy chair for their work on the majority and dissenting reports on the Korean free trade agreement. I think they are both worthy documents that grapple with complex and contentious issues. I am a free trader and I am proud of Labor's record in promoting free trade. We established trade relationships with China, now our biggest trading partner, under the Whitlam government. We drove through Australia's biggest tariff cuts, often unilaterally, under the Whitlam, Hawke and Keating governments. We provided international leadership on tariff reduction for agricultural products during the GATT and in the WTO through the Cairns Group. We provided crucial leadership for the establishment of the annual APEC
leaders meeting, a crucial forum for pushing the cause of free trade in our region, and the Bogor declaration on trade liberalisation in our region.

This is a proud record—a record of leadership. Unfortunately, the cause of free trade has stalled. The progress of multilateral trade agreements through the WTO has been extremely slow of late. As such, by necessity, increasing attention has been given in recent years to the second and third best options of regional trade agreements and bilateral trade agreements.

A Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement comes before us today in this context. It delivers worthy but hardly revolutionary tariff reductions and market-access gains. Against these benefits we are left to ponder the cost of trade diversion, new intellectual property obligations and the introduction of an investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms. In this context, I want to add a few additional comments, here today, to the contents of the majority report.

The majority report raises a number of concerns about the adequacy of the treaty-making process. I want to particularly echo the views of those stakeholders who have complained about of the adequacy of DFAT's consultation process on agreements like this. I had first-hand experience of this process before coming to this place and, in my experience, these consultations are a one-way street in which DFAT does not engage with the substance of industry submissions.

It may be that DFAT is more forthcoming with stakeholders with more traditional trade-law concerns. But when DFAT is asked to engage with the complex implications of changes to intellectual property law on industry, engaging with DFAT's consultation process feels like talking to a black hole, where submissions and representations are made but very little of substance ever comes back in the other direction.

It was clear from this inquiry that the overall level of satisfaction with DFAT's consultation process, particularly within the technology and intellectual property sector, is extremely low. With respect to intellectual property, I am pleased that the majority report notes the need for a 'less prescriptive' approach to IP and trade agreements and notes concerns over 'lack of recognition' of the broader public interest in the IP provisions of KAFTA. I also commend the dissenting report's more forthright coverage of copyright issues and largely agree with the substance of this section of the dissenting report.

In my first speech in this place I argued for an approach to intellectual property based on incentives for creators. I warned that at present:

… policymakers continue to view intellectual property as little more than an innate property right to be unthinkingly protected by government. This orthodoxy is buttressed by trade agreements, often negotiated without transparency or democratic accountability, that, instead of promoting free trade, are increasingly providing the expansion of private statutory monopolies.

I am opposed to the unthinking expansion of IP for the same reason that I support free trade. I believe that competition improves price, quality and diversity of products available to consumers and that monopolies, whether created by trade barriers or legislation, are generally not in the consumer interest.

There ought to be a clear weighing of costs and benefits before we go about expanding the scope of a private statutory monopoly, particularly one via the one-way ratchet of a trade agreement. Unfortunately, this treaty is another example of the unthinking expansion of intellectual property rights that I warned against in my first speech. The IP section of the
KAFTA treaty is also one of the more mendacious examples of policy laundering that I have seen in recent times. The consultation attachment of the National Interest Analysis of the KAFTA provides:

Consistent with Australia’s existing obligations in the Australia-US and Australia-Singapore FTAs, and to fully implement its obligations under KAFTA, the Copyright Act 1968 will require amendment in due course to provide a legal incentive for online service providers to cooperate with copyright owners in preventing infringement due to the High Court’s decision in Roadshow Films Pty Ltd v iiNet Ltd, which found that ISPs are not liable for authorising the infringements of subscribers.

This characterisation is frankly wrong at law.

The High Court's decision on Roadshow Films and iiNet did not find 'ISPs are not liable for authorising the infringements of subscribers', it simply found that a lower court's decision that—given the facts of that case—iiNet fell within the protection of the Copyright Act's safe-harbour provisions was correct at law.

I asked DFAT how the government had formed this erroneous legal view. In an answer provided on notice, DFAT implicitly accepted the error in this characterisation of the iiNet decision, noting:

At the time that the AUSFTA and the SAFTA were implemented, the Government’s view was that Australia complied with this obligation through technology neutral ‘authorisation liability’ provisions contained in sections 36 and 101 of the Copyright Act 1968. However, the High Court’s decision in Roadshow Films Pty Ltd v iiNet Ltd, substantially limited the circumstances in which ISPs will be found liable for authorising the infringements of subscribers.

So, between the NIA and this response from DFAT, we have moved from the iiNet decision finding that ISPs are not liable for authorising infringements to a statement that the decision 'substantially limited the circumstances in which ISPs will be found liable'. This is somewhat better but still not an accurate characterisation of the decision. The High Court's decision did not change anyone's legal rights or obligations. It merely confirmed the scope of these obligations, as understood by the industry for more than a decade, given a particular fact set.

The House should be under no illusions, the terms of the authorisation liability safe harbour provisions have not changed in law since the implementation of the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement. What is really going on here is what trade law commentators have recently begun describing as 'policy laundering'. That is the use of trade obligations—or in this case a bizarre interpretation of our trade obligations—to circumvent democratic debate of the merits of a policy initiative. The same DFAT answer I was citing earlier went on to say that this situation 'gives rise to some risk that Australia could be perceived as not fully complying with this obligation. In light of this decision, the government has formed the view that it would be prudent to minimise the risk'.

Let us be clear about what the government is saying here. The Attorney-General's Department has decided unilaterally that there is a 'risk' that Australia could be 'perceived' as being noncompliant with its obligations. It has done so without correspondence or prompting from the United States government. It has done so apparently without consideration for whether this view ought to be tested legally. No regard seems to be had for the idea that, even if we were perceived as being noncompliant, this position would be worth testing through the dispute resolution processes of the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement. It has formed this view without any of the usual public or industry consultation that you would expect before
making such a major policy decision. Finally, it formed this view based on a mistaken reading of the High Court's decision in iiNet. This is simply a subversion of democratic accountability. If the government wants to reform Australia's Copyright Act, it should make the argument for this change on the merits, not by hiding behind the flimsy claim that we cannot even debate the issue because of our trade obligations.

The IP provisions of this agreement are also troubling, as there has been absolutely no effort to estimate the costs and benefits of these changes to Australian law. While the DFAT secretary's certification letter for the KAFTA RIS states that the RIS draws on 'independent economic modelling of the impacts of the options of proceeding with or not proceeding with the KAFTA', it was confirmed in response to questions put to DFAT that none of the economic modelling done to justify the benefits of this agreement even considered the impact of the IP provisions of this agreement. We know from experience with the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement that these provisions can often have the largest economic impacts in agreements of this kind, and the failure to attempt to measure these costs and benefits is another failure of transparency and democratic accountability.

In this respect I am pleased that the committee report notes the recommendation of the Productivity Commission's report *Bilateral and regional trade agreements* that the costs and benefits of changes to IP provisions should be modelled on a stand-alone basis so that they can be assessed against the broader benefits of reducing trade barriers and market access. Given the concerns identified in the majority report about the transparency of these agreements and the inclusion of IP provisions in these agreements, this kind of modelling might usefully increase public confidence in the merits of future agreements. I am pleased to see that this recommendation was picked up by government senators, and I look forward to the government adopting this recommendation before future agreements, like the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, are provided to the JSCOT.

Finally, I want to say a few words about investor-state dispute settlement. The majority report notes the 'unintended consequences' of these agreements and notes that there is 'reason for concern' with respect to these provisions. It recommends that the government exercise a 'cautious approach' regarding the inclusion of ISDS provisions in upcoming FTAs. While DFAT indicated that Korea would not have agreed to finalise KAFTA without the inclusion of an ISDS mechanism, from the evidence heard by the committee the provision included in this agreement appears to be seriously problematic. It is true that Australia is already a party to more than 20 trade agreements that include an ISDS provision of some kind. As such we are already exposed to the risks and costs of try-on litigation by no-hopers unhappy with government policy decisions, such as we are currently seeing with respect to plain-packaged-tobacco legislation. However, that is no reason in itself to expand the scope of this risk for our nation. ISDS provisions of this kind deserve more scrutiny and more debate in this place and in the broader community. The issue ought to be given greater consideration and debate before the implementation of this agreement and subsequent regional and bilateral trade agreements.

**Ms PARKE** (Fremantle) (18:08): In any trade agreement, one expects there will be winners and losers but also that overall the benefits will outweigh the disadvantages. In the case of the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement, or KAFTA, the major winners include parts of the agricultural sector as well as copyright holders, as eloquently explained just now
by the member for Gellibrand, while the major losers include Australian manufacturing, IP consumers and those sadly overlooked items: Australian sovereignty and democracy.

The pure economic benefits of this agreement deliver a bump to the Australian economy of some $650 million after 15 years, or 0.04 per cent of GDP, which is, as the majority committee report concedes, minimal. The majority report instead points to the impact on individual sectors as justification for entering into the treaty. Yet, as much of the report demonstrates, the agreement also gives rise to significant negative ramifications.

Among the numerous concerns raised about KAFTA in the 78 submissions to the JSCOT, almost half focused on the operation and effect of investor-state dispute settlement, or ISDS, clauses, which will enable Korean corporations to sue Australia for laws or policies or even court decisions they find inconvenient, such as those regulating health, environment and labour standards. This will give foreign investors more rights than Australian investors. As my colleague, Kelvin Thomson, the deputy chair of JSCOT, has noted, this will elevate the interests of corporations above those of the public and their democratically elected governments.

Currently, Australia is being sued by Philip Morris, pursuant to an ISDS clause in an obscure agreement with Hong Kong, in relation to our plain-packaging laws. Quebec in Canada is being sued by a mining company for conducting an environmental review of fracking. Canada itself is being sued by pharmaceutical giant, Eli Lilly, for a court decision to refuse the grant of a medicine patent. El Salvador is being sued by an Australian-Canadian mining company for refusing to issue it with a gold-mining licence as a result of justified environmental and community concerns related to the last gold-mining venture that left the river running yellow with cyanide and arsenic poisoning.

These are just some of the 568 challenges made under ISDS clauses since 1993, but they demonstrate the perilous course this government has chosen. The ISDS arbitrations are not independent. Arbitration panels are made up of independent law experts, most of whom also represent investor complainants. Panellists can be an advocate one month and an arbitrator the next. They are paid by the hour. Consequently most cases take from three to five years. ISDS has no system of precedents or appeals, so decisions can be inconsistent and unfettered. The AFTINET submission quoted Juan Fernandez-Armesto, an arbitrator from Spain, who observed:

When I wake up at night and think about arbitration, it never ceases to amaze me that sovereign states have agreed to investment arbitration at all. Three private individuals are entrusted with the power to review, without any restrictions or appeal procedure, all actions of the government, all decisions of the courts and all laws and regulations emanating from parliament.

Proponents of KAFTA point to supposed safeguards in more recent ISDS clauses, which aim to protect public welfare in areas like health, safety and the environment. However, a number of submissions have pointed to examples where these so-called safeguards have not deterred investors from suing and where tribunals have ignored the intended limitations.

The committee heard evidence regarding a submission made by 100 legal experts to the European Commission regarding an ISDS clause in the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the EU and the US. The submission concluded that the safeguards, which are more extensive than those in KAFTA, would not be sufficient to uphold health and environmental legislation. Recently, Chief Justice French of the High Court
highlighted his concerns about the impact of ISDS cases on our judicial systems when he said:

Professor Brook Baker of North Eastern University School of Law in a note about the Eli Lilly case, posed a rather rhetorical question, but one which fairly arises when considering proceedings of that kind in relation to well-established, respected and independent judiciaries:

'After losing two cases before the appellate courts of a western democracy should a disgruntled foreign multinational pharmaceutical company be free to take that country to private arbitration claiming that its expectation of monopoly profits had been thwarted by the court's decision? Should governments continue to negotiate treaty agreements where expansive intellectual property-related investor rights and investor-state dispute settlement are enshrined into hard law?'

Those are the words of our Chief Justice of the High Court expressing concern about investor-state dispute settlement clauses.

ISDS provisions have a chilling effect on a government's willingness to look to regulate. For example, Canada withdrew a proposal for plain packaging of tobacco following the threat of ISDS arbitration under NAFTA. Here in Australia, rural communities have successfully campaigned for improved state government regulation of coal-seam gas mining. Yet the inclusion of ISDS in KAFTA may mean that Korean mining investors could prevent further regulation.

Submissions noted that the combination of stronger intellectual property rights and ISDS clauses in KAFTA will also have a stifling effect on innovation and research and on the protection of public health and access to reasonably-priced medicines. For all these reasons, it is no wonder that ISDS was rejected by the Productivity Commission in 2010, that Labor's platform opposes it and that in government Labor refused to negotiate a treaty with Korea that contained such a clause. By entering into an agreement with ISDS clauses, this government is being reckless or grossly negligent as to the likely serious and negative consequences. Let us hope it will not cost the country too dearly.

Debate adjourned.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke) (18:15): I believe it would suit the convenience of the Federation Chamber to now proceed to the grievance debate. There being no objection, the chair will allow that course to be followed. The question is:

That grievances be noted.

National Police Remembrance Day

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (18:15): In light of the approaching National Police Remembrance Day, I am thankful for this opportunity to acknowledge the significant role police officers play in our community and the great deal of risk and sacrifice that comes with their job. National Police Remembrance Day is held on 29 September each year to reflect on those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. Each year thousands of people across Australia stop to pay tribute to the brave members of the police force who have lost their lives and to offer support to their families.

I have felt compelled to raise awareness of the National Police Remembrance Day as I proudly served my community as a police officer for 25 years, reaching the rank of sergeant. I know what it is like to leave your family at home each day, to go out and protect other
families in the community. I joined the New South Wales Police Force in October 1985, graduating from class 216. My career in the Police Force was very rewarding, but as an officer I had to deal with many challenging and confronting situations. I will never forget my first autopsy, my first deceased person or my first fatal motor vehicle accident that I attended.

During my time in the New South Wales Police Force, I saw firsthand the devastating effects the death of a colleague can have on their family, friends and other police officers, and the entire community in which they serve. A death within the force is a solemn reminder of the dangers our police force face and the risks they must take every time they go to work to keep our community safe. As any member of an emergency service would know, it takes a great deal of courage to leave your own family behind to protect those who you have never met each time you go to work. When an officer is killed in the line of duty, there is no telling how many police officers are affected from all over Australia. Many officers reconsider the risk they take every day and the family members they would leave behind if something were to go wrong.

The camaraderie in the police force is second to none. That is why so many police officers and former members of the police force will stop to remember their fallen comrades on 29 September. Even if they do not personally know an officer who has been killed, they know how easy it could be for a day at work to turn into a horrible nightmare for themselves or their colleagues.

Each year a Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance is held to honour those comrades who have fallen in the line of duty. Officers travel from the Police Wall of Remembrance at the Domain in Sydney to Canberra and are joined by police officers from Australia's other states and territories along the way. The ride is a great tribute to those officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice protecting the community. It not only commemorates the sacrifice made by the fallen officers but raises money for the loved ones they have left behind.

Previously in this House I have spoken about two courageous police officers who were killed whilst on duty. Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding was killed after responding to an armed robbery and hostage situation on the Gold Coast in May 2011. Constable Leeding was described by his family and peers as a great father, a top bloke, a larrikin and a hero. His death had a devastating impact on the Gold Coast community and police officers across the country.

I also spoke about Senior Constable Jim Affleck, a highway patrol officer from my electorate who was run down during a police pursuit along the F5 in 2001. Jim was laying road spikes to stop a stolen vehicle when he was run down at high speed. I remember that day like it was yesterday, as would many others in Macarthur. After his death, Jim was awarded the Commissioner's Valour Award for his exceptional bravery. Jim was a dedicated professional police officer and his death shocked not only the police force but the entire Campbelltown community in which he served. The deaths of these two police officers, as with any police officer killed on duty, demonstrate the danger members of the force put themselves in every day to keep the community safe.

I join many people in the Macarthur electorate who have the utmost respect and admiration for the members of the police force. These men and women take great risks every time they go to work and they deserve so much respect from the community for risking their lives to protect others. Macarthur has more than 300 police officers working in Camden,
Campbelltown and Macquarie Fields local area commands, serving their local community. These men and women worked very hard to fight crime and keep our residents safe. Away from work they are normal people with loving families, with high hopes and dreams for the future. At work they are brave and courageous men and women who do everything they can to protect my electorate.

Earlier this year, I was proud to recognise in this House the recipients of the Macarthur Rotary eighth annual Police Officer of the Year awards. The award ceremony is an opportunity for Rotary clubs in the Macarthur region, on behalf of the community, to recognise the good work being done day in and day out by the majority of the men and women in the New South Wales Police Force. In 2014, the Macarthur Police Officer of the Year award was presented to Leading Senior Constable Eleanor Jenkins from the Campbelltown local area command. LSC Jenkins is a perfect example of the dedication and commitment that our police officers give to the job every time they go to work, combining shift work and family responsibilities whilst doing front-line policing duties.

Our police force is made up of thousands of hardworking, dedicated and courageous people like this, and has been for many decades. In 2012, New South Wales commemorated the 150th anniversary of the New South Wales Police Force. The anniversary was held on 1 March because, on this day in 1862, the independent police units of a colony were amalgamated into the single New South Wales Police Force. These officers serve our community with great integrity and honour. I hope that one day everyone will appreciate the sacrifices they make and the risks they take to protect us.

For some, being a police officer follows a long line of family members who also served in the police force. Senior Sergeant John Thompson celebrates 52 years in the force this year. He began his career in 1962. I was fortunate enough to work with Senior Sergeant Thompson towards the end of my career in the police force. He comes from a long line of dedicated police officers. Sergeant Thompson's great-great-grandfather, John Carroll, caught the bushranger Captain Moonlight. His grandfather and father were also police officers. Now Sergeant Thompson is the second longest serving police officer in New South Wales.

I mention Sergeant Thompson today because he is a fine example of the dedication and commitment that our police officers give to the job. It is not an easy job to do. Far too many officers have paid the ultimate sacrifice and have lost their lives doing it. Unless you have worked in the police force, or have a family member who does, it is hard to comprehend the dangers these men and women put themselves in every day to keep the community safe. Today, I would like to make a special mention of all the policemen and policewomen working tirelessly in my electorate. Macarthur owes a great deal to these police officers for their ongoing commitment to protecting our community. On behalf of the people of Macarthur, I would like to thank those who currently serve our community. You deserve the highest respect for the work you do.

Over the years, I have met with many of these officers who love their job serving the community in this way. But no matter how much they love being a police officer, they all know the risks and dangers they face every time they put their uniform on. In New South Wales alone, we have lost more than 240 police officers in the line of duty since August 1803 for a variety of causes. These include being shot by bushrangers, drowning whilst crossing a creek, being shot by an offender, being assaulted, motorcycle accidents during pursuit and
motor vehicle accidents. No matter how they died, it is terribly sad when the men and women who have dedicated their lives to protecting others are killed whilst doing so.

Today, I would also like to pay tribute to Police Legacy organisations across the country. Police Legacy is a not-for-profit organisation which provides emotional and financial support to the widows and children of deceased police officers. The mission statement of the New South Wales Police Legacy is that no widow, widower or child of deceased, serving, or former police officers will ever feel forgotten or in need.

The New South Wales organisation currently provides support for more than 1,300 police family members, caring for children as young as two and widows as old as 101. As of May 2014, Police Legacy Queensland was supporting 48 families. South Australian Police Legacy has been in operation since 1989. It cares for more than 360 widows and 60 children. There are currently 361 widows, three widowers and 43 children under 20 years of age being supported by Western Australian Police Legacy. Victorian and Northern Territory Police Legacy organisations are also strongly committed to supporting families, widows and their children. Today, I would like to acknowledge the good work of Police Legacy who look after remaining loved ones of the police officers that have been killed in the line of duty.

In the lead-up to National Police Remembrance Day, my heart goes out to the families of all police officers who have been killed in the line of duty. I offer them my heartfelt condolences. I am sure that they share with me the hope that one day society will understand and respect the great undertaking that is required to serve as a police officer. Until then, I am sure the brave men and women of Australia's police forces will continue to protect their communities despite the dangers they face and the harsh reality that some may not return home to their families. I believe it is important that we in this House continue to express our gratitude and reaffirm our support for the nation's 56,000 police officers whose dedication and commitment ensure continuous peace and safety across our communities.

**Iraq and Syria**

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (18:24): Last week on Twitter a person called for my execution for treason because I had questioned the government's rapid escalation of our new involvement in Iraq from a purely humanitarian mission to one where we appear to be joining the US in an open-ended fight against IS. A call for my execution may be extreme, but it demonstrates how the beating of the drums of war and the hysteria this generates inevitably prevent the kind of calm, serious and rational discussion that is called for when decisions are being made to commit Australians overseas to kill and potentially to be killed. It is natural for us to respond instinctively to confronting images. The graphic and brutal murders of Westerners David Haines, Steven Sotloff and James Foley—people who only sought to do good in the world—have offended our sense of humanity and stoked our desire for justice in a way that countless other atrocities in Iraq and Syria—as well as in Gaza, Afghanistan, Pakistan and many countries in Africa—seem not to have. But given the disastrous consequences of previous military interventions, as well as the continually evolving and incredibly complex situation in the Middle East, it has perhaps never been more important to curb that natural instinct for retaliation and the use of hard power and consider the root causes. In this it may be helpful to reflect on what an elderly woman in Northern Ireland said to one of the former heads of our national counterterrorism organisation before the peace talks: 'If you've got nothing to live for, you've got everything to die for.'
The challenges in Iraq—some caused and others exacerbated by the ill-judged coalition of the willing in 2003—arise from deep ethnic communal, cultural and religious issues. As the Ottoman Turks discovered, and as has become even clearer ever since, these issues are never going to be resolved by outsiders, especially not outsiders with guns and bombs, and not by approaching this as a crusade against a death cult. Fundamentally, this is an issue of human security. And does anyone believe you can ensure the security of humans by bombing humans? At the centre of any credible national security policy is human security—individual wellbeing and community harmony that allows people everywhere to go about their business without fear, without constraints on their freedoms as enshrined in law and without the constant worry that someone wants to take their possessions and enslave their children. That, of course, is the essential meaning of the term 'security': without worry—sine cura, for the classicists.

The authoritative and internationally respected commentator Rachel Shabi made the following observations just this week:

It should be obvious by now that if such bombing campaigns have an effect, it is to make things much worse. What western leaders portray as valiant efforts to rid the world of evil forces such as ISIL just don't play the same way in the region. In Iraq, for instance, western military intervention is viewed as support for the authoritarian, sectarian and West-approved leadership, whose persecution and air strikes are so bad that many Sunnis are prepared to put up with ISIL, for now, as preferable.

Western military intervention thus gives ISIL its recruitment fuel of choice: A war with a self-interested external enemy around which to galvanise support.

Meanwhile, arming supposed "moderates" in Syria is equally delusional: Even self-declared moderates have on the ground, allied with the currently dominant ISIL in the fight against dictator Bashar al-Assad, and even these so-called moderates have carried out beheadings and other brutalities. A cursory glance around the region shows exactly what happens when the West arms groups that somehow fit the "moderate" descriptive; as one writer most succinctly puts it: "The terrorists fighting us now? We just finished training them."

As with the situation between Russia and Ukraine, Australia has no strategic stake or status in Iraq and Syria, except as a compassionate and engaged member of the international community. One has to ask why on earth the UN was not our first port of call, especially at a time when we occupy a valuable seat on the UN Security Council, where we can examine with other countries who are more familiar with the situation in the region than we are the potential for political and diplomatic solutions. That means considering the use of smart rather than hard power.

It has been a matter of great surprise and disappointment to me that the government has not engaged with the UN before committing special forces and equipment to the so-called coalition of the concerned. In my view we should be endeavouring to ensure that there is a broadbased international partnership engaging moderate Islamic states such as Indonesia and Malaysia as well as neighbouring Middle Eastern states such as Jordan and Turkey, under the auspices of the UN, to address the very real humanitarian and human security issues that are at the heart of the current problem.

In my earlier speech on the Iraq conflict, on 4 September, I called for a formal debate in the Australian parliament. While this would be unlikely to change the result, it would represent an open and proper process for the Australian government in relation to its involvement in a conflict that will be costly and will inevitably have serious and uncertain geopolitical
consequences. At this point it is very poorly defined, in terms of time and scale, objectives, cost, rationale, international legal basis and underlying international agreement.

Such a debate would have the effect of airing the many issues and questions that remain unanswered. For instance, how does the use of armed force, in the manner that the US, Australia and other participants in the current coalition intend to apply it, actually serve the humanitarian and political objectives that should be at the centre of the international community's response to events in Northern Iraq and Syria?

Airstrikes in Northern Iraq may deplete IS but also are likely to displace some IS members to other parts of Iraq and Syria. After the billions spent by the coalition of the willing on training and equipping the Iraqi army, it still seems as though its capacity to deal with such threats remains limited. Does this then mean a second attempt to train and equip the Iraqis? Why would this be any more successful than the first time? Does it mean a return to boots on the ground in Iraq and, if so, by which countries? What will happen in Syria where Bashar al-Assad's forces have committed atrocities against civilians on a grander scale than IS and where various countries have provided funds and weapons, to either side, to continue that conflict by proxy?

If the proposal is to arm only moderate, Free Syrian Army fighters—as opposed to, say, an al-Qaeda linked group like al-Nusra—what would make such fighters stop fighting Assad and start fighting ISIL? Are we going to start arming Hezbollah or the Syrian army itself against ISIL? Is it possible to guarantee that weapons will not be used against civilians? How will the coalition deal with the participation of countries, such as Saudi Arabia, that have been involved in supporting Sunni jihadist groups, like IS?

Let us remember that Saudi Arabia is a country in which beheadings by the government regime are commonplace, including for the offence of sorcery. How will the coalition treat its partner Egypt, where hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood supporters have been sentenced to death and where journalists, including Peter Greste, have been sentenced to long jail terms after sham trials? How will our government treat Australians citizens who have travelled abroad to fight with moderate groups against Assad and/or IS? Will they be the recipients of our weapons and assistance in Iraq or Syria, only to be prosecuted when they try to come home?

There is an enormous danger in moving so quickly that these questions are not examined and when the possible consequences are not thought through, anticipated and planned for. I am not suggesting that we should not be involved in protecting civilians from atrocities or that we should not endeavour to bring perpetrators of these crimes to justice. However, our actions should always be based on humanitarian objectives and be in accordance with the international rule of law.

I am concerned too about the increased security risk to Australians everywhere as a result of our involvement in further action in Iraq. I was working for the UN in the Middle East when Australia joined the so-called coalition of the willing, in 2003. I was advised by security officers of the heightened risk I faced as a result of Australia's involvement in that the debacle. In some places, such as Egypt, I was even advised not to disclose the fact that I was Australian.
We Australians like to think of ourselves as universally loved but this is not always the case, particularly as a result of our involvement in Iraq in 2003 and the public positions taken from time to time by Australian political leaders in support of Israel's actions against the Palestinians, even where these are plainly contrary to international law. These issues matter to a great many people in the world and we are foolish if we fail to think through the consequences of our words and actions. One of these consequences is the fertile ground such issues provide for the recruitment of new members to the extremist cause.

Finally, I note that with the present focus on national security it is extraordinary that the Prime Minister is not attending the global summit on climate change. In this year's quadrennial defence review, the US defence department describes the threat of climate change as a very serious national security vulnerability. Australia's current national security strategy names climate change, along with the threat of the resurgence of violent political groups, as a broad global challenge with national security implications. National security is not all about jet fighters and special-action forces or even the numbers and powers of the Australian police.

If the Prime Minister really wants Australians to insouciantly go about their business, he needs to re-examine his climate change policy—or lack thereof—which many Australians, as demonstrated in yesterday's climate-action rallies, regard as regressive, ignorant, destructive and politically self indulgent.

No-one will argue against steps to genuinely improve the security of Australians, but the core issue here is whether the steps this government is taking at home and abroad are being properly considered and calibrated to meet the reality rather than the hype, to achieve properly defined outcomes rather than draw us into yet another counterproductive military engagement. That judgement cannot be made when there is no meaningful debate in the national parliament. (Time expired)

Macquarie Electorate: Blue Mountain Bushfires Anniversary

Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (18:34): I rise to speak today as we approach the one year anniversary of the 17 October 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires, which caused much disaster and devastation in the region, and to acknowledge the federal government's contributions toward the strengthening and future resilience of disaster-prone communities in the electorate of Macquarie.

The impact of the bushfires was significant: 208 homes were lost with another 191 damaged. These events renewed awareness and respect for the danger posed by fires in our own communities. It is important to note that the Hawkesbury was also affected through this time. People living in both the Blue Mountains and in the Hawkesbury communities understand that these dangers are part of our everyday lives in summer and during the bushfire seasons. But there are steps that can be taken, and are being taken, to promote safety and resilience.

There has been some criticism of governments not doing enough. I said then, and I continue to say now, that it is, and it was not, the time to politicise grief and to keep the vulnerable in a place of vulnerability. Grief cannot be measured and years of belongings and memories cannot be recovered. The loss to homes, families and businesses can hardly be measured or communicated. What we can do is help to build an even stronger and even more resilient community should we face such a situation again. In doing so the federal
government, together with the New South Wales state government, recently announced assistance in the form of financial grants toward the recovery and resilience of communities affected by natural disasters under the Natural Disaster Resilience Program known as NDRP and the Flexible Community Grants Program under CatC.

Today, I want to speak about the wonderful organisations that have received grants to continue their great and devoted work in the community and build further resilience. The Natural Disaster Resilience Program, or NDRP, is a disaster mitigation and community resilience competitive grants program jointly funded by the Australian and New South Wales governments. It was announced this month by the Minister for Justice, Michael Keenan, and the New South Wales Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Stuart Ayres, that $27 million in funding would be provided through the Natural Disaster Resilience Program. The $27 million will include funding for three programs established under the NDRP: firstly, the Emergency Volunteer Support Scheme; secondly, the Community Resilience Innovation Program; and thirdly, the State Emergency Management Projects program. These are to be delivered over two years and will assist communities in New South Wales in building resistance to natural disasters primarily through a range of mitigation and resilience projects designed to enhance community preparedness.

Locally, in the electorate of Macquarie, I had the pleasure of announcing these grants with my state colleague for the Blue Mountains, Roza Sage. Among potential recipients there are all kinds of natural disaster response services extended to local council and nongovernment organisations. One is the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre to which the Natural Disaster Resilience Program has contributed $90,000 under the Community Resilience Innovation Program's Heads Up For Fire project. Heads Up For Fire will operate in partnership with the Rural Fire Service to establish 40 community hubs. Under the direction of appointed volunteer coordinators, the initiative will build upon an existing volunteer and community-based program to develop a more integrated and coordinated disaster response network. I am pleased to bring this program to the members' attention, as it demonstrates the government's determination to promote, support and equip fire-prone communities for disaster preparedness.

Another recipient in the electorate is the Kurrajong Rural Fire Brigade which has received, through the Emergency Volunteer Support Scheme for 2013-14, a grant of $7,100 towards their training room. The refit will contribute to a more efficient work space for Kurrajong Rural Fire Brigade volunteers to ensure they have the resources they need to carry out their work.

Also under the Emergency Volunteer Support Scheme, the St Albans Rural Fire Service has received a grant of $6,480 towards new training equipment. Specifically, these funds will go towards the purchase of a Smartboard to facilitate community training and awareness in bushfire response and survival. Newer technologies like the Smartboard are highly valuable as a tool for training and information and the St Albans Rural Fire Service will extend their use to survival planning, hazard reduction and related issues.

Allow me to continue on to the Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grants Program. These grants are specifically geared towards community recovery after the devastation of the October 2013 bushfires. The flexible grants program will contribute a total package of $1.8 million to facilitate raising awareness and preparedness among volunteer and community
organisations in bushfire prone regions within New South Wales. I would like to share with
the House some of these projects included in the first round of flexible community grants
within the electorate of Macquarie totalling a joint federal and New South Wales state
government contribution up to this point of $704,520.00. The Blue Mountains Economic
Enterprise have received a grant of $105,000 towards hosting the Blue Mountains Conference
and Expo, as well as an $80,000 grant to assist in local food industry development. These
projects focus on economic stimulation, risk mitigation and disaster preparedness so that local
businesses achieve greater resilience in the advent of bushfires.

The Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre is the recipient of $50,000 towards the
employment of a project worker and facilitation of a community network program to raise
disaster preparedness. Grants towards the construction of various electronic signage at local
schools have been issued as warning devices during disasters and primary communication
tools to keep communication members informed and connected.

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School will receive $35,000 towards a remotely managed
LED sign. Springwood Public School will receive a grant of $28,756 for electronic signage.
Winmalee Public School Parents and Citizens Association will receive $50,000 in funding for
solar-powered electronic signage at local Winmalee schools, and a grant of $40,000 has been
issued to Mount Victoria Public School for the installation of electronic signage. New
technologies like LED and electronic signage will assist in informing, connecting and
warning local communities in the incidence of disasters.

In sum, 22 projects were approved for the electorate of Macquarie. The remainder, in brief,
include: $13,300 for Leura Village Association's Leura Harvest Festival; $50,000 for the Blue
Mountains City Council towards the Yellow Rock Community Space Project; $22,394 to the
Mid Mountains Neighbourhood Centre Incorporated for Rebuilding Bushfire Preparedness
and Networks in Local Neighbourhood; Blue Mountains Family Support Services
 Incorporated will receive $12,297 towards developing a sustainable fire related online
community for residents; and $33,500 for the Springwood Neighbourhood Centre
Cooperative Limited for a fireworks recovery project. Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise
will receive $80,000 for local food industry development and the Blue Mountains World
Heritage Institute will receive $11,000 for an evaluation project on bushfire risk and
community strategies. $8,246 will go to Mount Wilson Progress Association Incorporated for
bushfire preparedness and risk awareness signage. Mount Victoria Community Association
will receive $14,465 for The Crossing Town—On the Edge project and the Mountains Youth
Services Team are granted $24,000 for Midnight Basketball Bushfire Recovery Tournaments.
Springwood Neighbourhood Centre will receive $29,200 and Winmalee Neighbourhood
Centre will receive $27,273. Catholic Care Social Services Parramatta will receive $39,000
for a bushfire financial support worker and Mountains Outreach Community Service will
receive $2520 for Mid Mountains Family Fun Day. Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre will
receive an additional $7,710 for renewing local economies through business improvement and
the Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre will receive $20,000 towards information
seminars on insurance preparedness.

On behalf of the community I would like to acknowledge the federal government and the
state government of New South Wales for their commitment to aid in the recovery and
resilience of communities affected by the October 2013 bushfires in the electorate of
Macquarie. We look forward to the opportunity of the round 2 competitive grants and I want to encourage the community at large to apply. Together we are investing more in the future of the Blue Mountains, which remains a region of beauty generating attractive tourism and a great lifestyle. But in going on there will be a challenge leading up to the bushfire season 2014.

Second Sydney Airport

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (18:44): It is good to be in a chamber where I have an opportunity to share some time with colleagues from Western Sydney, some who have passionately fought on an issue that I have spoken about, others who are realising that the Nirvana that is going to lob on their doorstep is not necessarily going to help that area. That is the issue of Badgerys Creek. I note member for Macarthur here—a once staunch opponent—has become a muted supporter of the airport. The member for Macquarie has constituents who will no doubt be very interested about the environmental impact of an airport in the region operating 24 hours a day, as does the member for Mitchell, who occupies the Deputy Speaker's role tonight. I am careful not to make any reflections, Deputy Speaker—I am wise to that. But certainly the Deputy Speaker in other places has rightly voiced a concern about the impact on his community of a 24-hour-a-day, no-curfew airport, an airport that has been pushed by a coalition of eastern suburbs interests that have deigned to tell the western suburbs what is good for us. Not necessarily content to give us the infrastructure or services that we actually need, we are told that the best thing to create jobs in our region is an airport of the variety that is being pushed by the coalition.

The coalition in the Abbott government has managed to cut education spending, with $270 million cut from schools in the Chifley electorate over the next 10 years. That is the highest figure in Western Sydney, but there are a number of electorates that are also affected by that. They have changed the higher education funding, and we will see 40 per cent of funds going to universities cut and fees increased for the people of the region who are going to UWS. We have been undermined there. Health spending has been cut and in our area vital health infrastructure removed, but there is $1.5 billion for an airport that we did not ask for. There is also all this money for roads around the airport—not necessarily to deal with the congestion issues that affect Western Sydney but mainly to deal with the congestion that will arise out of this airport. So that money stands there, and we are told that the reason we have to support it is jobs.

We are told that 60,000 jobs would be created, which is just ridiculous given that Sydney Airport has just under 30,000 jobs for 28 million movements. You cannot tell me that a single-runway airport in Western Sydney will create 60,000 jobs as opposed to the three-runway configuration in the gateway of Sydney Airport. The reality is it is going to be 5,000 jobs for quite some period of time. For a region that has nearly two million people, 5,000 jobs is roughly one job for every 400 residents of Western Sydney. I am happy for people to quibble if they think the figure is different; I do not think it is going to be much different from that.

It is either 5,000 jobs or 60,000 jobs. It cannot be both. It is either a one-runway configuration delivering 5,000 jobs or it is something bigger that will deliver 60,000. Either way, people are being fed a lot of nonsense, not being told the truth and not being given fact. I want to come to the point of fact as well because it is important that fact be utilised and
deployed on this issue that will impact on the lives of many people in Western Sydney when they are not getting the services and infrastructure they need across or region and are being told that the money that is being cut out of health, infrastructure and education is going to be devoted to an airport generating 5,000 jobs that will stick that way for 5,000 years.

Some of the people who have come on board this project who have previously been in opposition are people like, for example, UWS, which understood previously that this was not the best project around. But you have Chris Brown, the Western Sydney resident who lives in Birchgrove and also sits on the UWS board. He has done a very good lobbying effort on that board to ensure that the new vice-chancellor cops onto this notion that he will support the airport. And what irony that UWS, which will see its funding cut, be forced to cut jobs itself and also be forced to lift fees on the very people it has a mandate to represent in Western Sydney to ensure they get higher education, will support an airport and see the money that has gone from the university plugged into the airport. It is quite ironic to see that actually happen.

We have also seen the Sydney Business Chamber, represented by David Borger. I remember standing shoulder to shoulder with David when he represented residents and was opposed to the airport. Now that he represents business interests, it is good to see that his consistency has been maintained and that he has stood up for the residents of Western Sydney—no such thing! He has now come out and been pushing the airport and changed from his role as mayor. He is now representing business interests and pushing the airport.

It is interesting that this is the longest death-siren signal for Parramatta. Quite frankly, getting an airport in south-west Sydney, combined with the growth of the south-west growth centre over there, will see economic activity shift from that part of Western Sydney to an economic activity lift in south-western Sydney. It will be interesting to see what role Parramatta will have in years to come. When I raised the point about the need for us to think carefully about urban development in the south-west—to ensure that we had a CBD that was properly planned, allowed for good people movement and good long-term jobs and which provided a new focus for economic activity in our area—David Borger labelled that as ‘the most stupid idea he had ever heard’. But if Badgerys Creek does go ahead, consider what it will do to Parramatta—and he is supposed to lobby for Parramatta’s interests. I would have to say that supporting Badgerys Creek in his position probably deserves the same condemnation that he is ready to dish out to others.

The most important thing that needs to be borne in mind is the one where I made a reference about facts. As I said earlier, I note the presence of the member for Macarthur; I note that the Deputy Speaker has spoken about the impact of this airport on the amenity for his constituents, and rightly so; and I also note the member for Macquarie’s interest, although she is not here. But it is interesting to ask: when are we going to get an environmental impact statement on this airport? The last one was done in 1997. Anyone who has lived in Western Sydney for an extended period of time knows that the face of our region has changed remarkably. It has opened up to development; there are more and more young families going out west and they made decisions on the basis that both political parties opposed the development of Badgerys Creek. They saw new estates opening up and they can quibble rightly about the speed at which infrastructure development matched growth in residential terms.
But it has changed. With the topography of that part of Western Sydney being the way it is—hemmed in by the Great Dividing Range and with the Cumberland Plains being as flat as they are—and with Western Sydney having some of the highest rates of asthma in the country, then you worry about what might happen in terms of air quality in that area. Or you might worry about the impact of the 24-hour facility in certain parts of Western Sydney as well. And yet we have heard nothing about an environmental impact statement to update the 1997 statement that was brought down. We have heard nothing!

We have had a lot of people, for instance, cheer about the fact that there are contractors on site. There are surveyors on site at Badgerys Creek and all these works happening. All this money has been committed to roadworks in that area but no-one has had the decency actually to say when the environmental impact statement will come out. I have heard rumours from those opposite that there is a suggestion that there will be no EIS. If they are just rumours, then they be that. But there certainly needs to be clarity about whether or not there will be an EIS.

I went to a briefing that was called by the Deputy Prime Minister—which the Deputy Prime Minister failed to attend himself—where, when this question was put forward, the department seemed to suggest that there might not be an environmental impact statement; that it might be refreshed via a desktop study—a desktop evaluation. That is simply no excuse for the requirement that the proper work and the analysis not be undertaken. We need to ensure that the people of Western Sydney, in having had this monstrosity forced upon them—this white elephant that is going to suck up billions of taxpayer dollars at the same time as losing out on health, education and infrastructure spending—are not also as a result having an environmental impact from this airport operating in that way. The EIS should tell us whether or not we are facing a one- or three-runway configuration in that area and what the environment impact of that will be. Let the people of Western Sydney know fully what impact will be placed upon them.

But again, it is simply a rush for publicity by this government to try to keep eastern Sydney interests happy. And they are aided and abetted by Western Sydney Liberal representatives, who have failed to stand up for their constituencies and who have instead just let the government roll this proposal out and see the longer-term interests of the region impacted in this way.

Youth Employment

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (18:54): It is very lucky for me to be able to follow the member for Chifley, having just left the chair and assumed my role as member for Mitchell in Western Sydney, because I rise today to speak about the rising phenomenon of youth unemployment, not just in Sydney and in Western Sydney but also across Australia, and its long-term consequences and problems for young people. The member for Chifley has a longstanding position against an airport in Western Sydney—the one economic driver that will provide jobs, investment, growth and a positive future for young people in Western Sydney—whereas we know that his government had a vision of handouts and government payments for young people, which, of course, is completely unsustainable. You do need economic drivers. You need good decisions that drive economic activity. An airport is an economic driver and will provide great opportunities for young people in Western Sydney.
Youth unemployment continues to be a sustained problem. We saw increases in unemployment in general under the Labor government and now we have a situation where there are about 266,000 unemployed youth in Australia at the moment, a national rate of unemployment amongst 15- to 24-year-olds of 12.9 per cent. The Brotherhood of Saint Laurence also estimates that there are about 300,000 more youth unemployed who are underemployed—that is, they have some form of employment but they would like more, more shifts, more work and more pay, and cannot obtain it. That is about a half a million young people who are either out of work or looking for more work.

This is a very serious issue. I note that in my area, in Sydney's Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury region, in the new areas that they put together—something called SA4 regions, which are a bit different to the old ones—there are 2,500 unemployed youths aged 15 to 24. But, in neighbouring Blacktown, there are 5,400, a rate of 17.3 per cent, 15- to 24-year-olds seeking work who cannot obtain it. It is 12 per cent my own area. To me, this is unacceptably high and successive governments failed in many ways to get the trades and technical training correct, especially the last government. There continues to be a big gap in our dealing with the problem of youth unemployment and unemployment more generally.

I was pleased to see the Minister for Industry announce the second tranche of VET reforms that are to deliver industry led and job-ready skills and training. It sounds like an obvious statement of the facts to say that we should have job-ready skills and training programs, but the ideological approach of the previous government, particularly the previous Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, dismantled the Howard government's successful technical college model, which connected people with a real job at the end of vocational training. I particularly note the Anglican technical college just outside my electorate, in Greenway, which took a lot of kids from disadvantaged backgrounds but had one of the highest retention rates in the state, almost 90 per cent. That is because it focused not just on the theory of VET training but on the practical workplace—that is, master plumbers and master builders. With the week of theory, it provided students two weeks hands on, in the job, to learn the specifications required by the master builders and the master plumbers, then returning them to the classroom and to the workplace. That is job-ready training. It sounds obvious, but it is not so obvious.

We also see in Australia that at the moment just one in two apprentices completes their training—that is 50 per cent not completing their training—and just one apprentice in three completes their training in the same area they started. This is a great problem and the Minister for Industry, in announcing the second tranche of VET reforms, also made changes to the way the regulator, ASQA, operates to cut the excessive red tape that many of our high-performing training providers have been subject to for many, many years, allowing them to get on with doing what they do best: delivering high-calibre training that meets industry and the economy's needs. Amen to that. We need less regulation in this space and more practical outcomes. Governments state and federal spend a lot of money on training and we should be less than enthusiastic about many of these outcomes. We think we should have a general commitment across the chamber to ensure that money is well spent in this because the outputs here—the victims—are young people in our country, who are not obtaining work even though they are trained.

I have heard firsthand examples from people like the Master Builders, who tell me that you will get a certificate III bricklayer who has finished TAFE, who has his certificate, who is
unable to lay a brick—he is unemployable, that poor person who has been fully trained. That young person is then unable to seek work because he does not have the skills to meet the job. He is unable to seek further training in bricklaying because he has his certificate, and the system says that you cannot return to get further training once you have your certificate. Even though he has spent plenty of time and the government has spent plenty of money training him, he does not have the skills to do the job. That is a real example, and there are many, many of these real examples in our country today—an unacceptable situation by far.

I certainly welcome the Minister for Industry's second round of VET reforms and I know the government has a great program for the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network—matching, in particular, employees with employers and potential apprentices with employers; providing advice about training options; offering personalised mentoring; and this makes a real difference to individual apprentices identified as needing extra support; offering guidance to business about taking apprentices; and managing the administration of an apprenticeship, including the training contact. These new arrangements are client-centred support arrangements and I have to say they are a welcome development.

I also want to note, in particular, the small and medium business feedback from around the country about the archaic industrial relations system that is preventing young people from getting a job. We saw under the previous Labor government a regression of the industrial relations climate which has, of course, paralysed the ability of small business to do the job we need them to be doing, and that is adding extra young people for that underemployment, those 300,000 young people who are underemployed, and those 266,000 young people who cannot get a job in Australia right now. The anecdotal evidence is severe when you go and talk to your family owned enterprise, the small business cafes who want to open on a Sunday or a public holiday—in regional areas in particular—but are unable to open because they cannot compete.

When a small business or a family business cannot open because of harsh penalty rates that are out of sync with their big business competitors—that is, big business and fast food chains pay less in penalty rates under their awards than restaurants and catering and hospitality on a Sunday or on a public holiday—everybody loses. The business owner cannot make any money. The young people cannot get the shifts that we know they are looking for on weekends—those people who study during the week. And we cannot get the goods and services that we need at reasonable prices on Sundays and public holidays. It is a lose-lose situation. It is why we have seen greater calls from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Retail Association, all pointing to the fact that, particularly for young workers, these penalty rates that came about in an era when people were very religious or there was a particular penalty with working on a Saturday or Sunday, and these things no longer apply to the trading environment. They are simply archaic institutions supported by unions because the modern union movement is really about less work for more pay. It is their constant push. We saw a case that they just took to the Fair Work Commission and won to reduce the age at which adult wages have to be paid. Immediately upon winning that case they said, 'Now we are going to push to have it pushed further and further down—19- and 18-year-olds.' This is unrealistic in the current employment and economic environment and a real threat to youth employment.
If there are businesses out there—and there are many in many parts of this country—that want to open more and compete more and add more young people on, more people in more jobs are obviously better for our economy. I want to make it clear that we are not talking about, in this instance, public sector workers. We are not talking about nurses who give up late night shifts; we are not talking about police officers or fire officers who have to do unusual or unreasonable hours. Those penalties are absolutely appropriate and apply for industries and sectors of the economy where there is a penalty for working overnight or late. We are talking about archaic penalty rates, in some cases double-time and a half on a public holiday for a restaurant versus a fast-food chain, which is time and a half. How is that restaurant supposed to compete with a fast-food chain with that gap on a public holiday? That is why you cannot access goods and services; that is what is holding young people back in this country.

I am pleased to see the government moving so fast on the reform of the VET and training sector. Youth unemployment continues to be a major concern for me and people and members across Western Sydney, and colleagues in regional and rural areas, in particular, where youth unemployment rates are climbing and climbing. We need to recognise that we need to have a flexible industrial relations system and a flexible economy that can encourage those 1.7 million small businesses in Australia today to add that extra worker or that extra shift, and we need to give them every incentive to do so.

**Youth Employment**

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (19:04): One can profess an interest in youth unemployment and belabour the point with rhetoric—quite doctrinal rhetoric—about deregulating the labour market; however, the question of youth unemployment has a few other facets. We have the situation the previous speaker spoke of, of 'handouts and payments'. I guess he is speaking of the Youth Connections program which engages vulnerable, disengaged and often marginalised youth in education and employment transition services. Perhaps he is talking about Partnership Brokers, which was a program that worked with 22 of the top 50 ASX companies and had brokered over 1,800 agreements between schools, employers and charities to make sure young Australians at risk of long-term unemployment moved into work. Perhaps the other 'handout and payment' he was whingeing about was the National Career Development Strategy which supported vital links between industry, students and training options.

I do not regard these as useless, pointless exercises. I could quote, for instance, David Thompson, chief executive of Jobs Australia, which represents non-profit employment service providers, who said in the magazine Justice Trends No. 154 of September 2014 that he could not see how some young job seekers would be able to survive, let alone meet the additional costs of finding out about and applying for jobs:

For those people who do not have access to other forms of support, like from their family, I just don't understand how anyone can imagine it is going to be possible for them to do these things.

He was, of course, referring to—amongst other things—the pushing of young people under 25 from Newstart onto the lower youth allowance—a cut of $48 a week or almost $2,500 a year.

Let us put that in real terms. There has been a lot of conjecture about and coverage of a very elaborate visit to Paris by the Minister for Education in recent times; there has been talk about the thousands of dollars he was able to spend on hotels. Let's emphasise the figures
affecting these young people: their income is reduced from a paltry $13,273 a year to $10,774. So when we talk about youth unemployment we also have to have some compassion—not just rhetoric about changing industrial relations and shift penalties, but compassion for the practical circumstances of young people once they are unemployed.

It is all right for him to come here tonight and talk about unemployment under the previous government. What are the facts we face today? Unemployment figures over the last two months were 6.1 per cent and 6.2 per cent. In the *Australian Financial Review* of 8 August, Jacob Greber made a few comments about the situation. He noted that the seasonally adjusted figure of 6.4 per cent in July was the highest rate of unemployment in this country since 2002. He noted that youth unemployment was over 20 per cent for the first time in 20 years. I agree that the current Prime Minister has a great respect for John Howard, but to make your main purpose in life repeating his unemployment figures—to have the worst unemployment figure in this country since the previous Howard government—is a very questionable aim in life.

Jacob Greber, in that article, commented on the weakening trend in hiring and noted that payroll growth for the previous three months was only 6,900. This comes from a Prime Minister who promised to create a million jobs. I know there is a defence for every one of these commitments made before the last election: 'We'll ignore what we said on pension rates; we'll ignore what we said on family incomes; we'll ignore what we said in regard to private universities.' Breaking all those other very firm, very tight commitments can allegedly be defended on the basis that we have got to reduce the deficit. They are all meaningless, supposedly, because of this one axiomatic phrase.

We now have a situation where unemployment is, as noted, the highest in 20 years. Then we have one of these characters in the government saying that perhaps people can go for 40 interviews every month. This is in a situation where there were 146,000 vacancies in the country to be shared amongst 740,000 unemployed people. That assumes every one of those people is suitable for employment; quite frankly, there are people in the labour force whom nobody in this room—or nobody anywhere—would hire for a variety of reasons. These 740,000 unemployed people are going to rush around doing 40 interviews a month for these 146,000 jobs. We note that criticism of this has not only come from predictable sources—from welfare organisations, trade unions or the Labor Party; it has come from a significant number of employer organisations. They are saying small business does not have time to be catering for this. They are not going to be sitting at the front gate waiting for all these people to walk down the road—or get out of their cars if they can afford them—and go to these interviews. When the previous speaker talked about the situation of young unemployed people, it is a matter of the actual circumstances that they face.

I have been pleasantly surprised in my electorate and even in the area where I live. I would have thought the general disregard for older people and for young people, the negative criticisms they make of them and their attitudes towards them would have dominated this debate. But I have been pleasantly surprised at how many older people—not only in the case of their own youth or their own children but also in the wider society—have come to me deploiring these attacks on the income levels and these requirements that the other group would be denied any benefits for six months—denied income, totally. The education department of this government and the public servants went before the Senate estimates committee and said that, with penalties, some of these people would be unpaid for 11 months.
We cannot all assume that these young people have the support of the income levels that members of parliament can provide for their children. They are sometimes in very difficult family circumstances. Their own parents can be chronically ill or chronically unemployed. They can have dysfunctional families where they do not get any income support.

I referred earlier, in quoting Mr David Thompson, to this article by the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council in the journal *Justice Trends*, which I referred to earlier. There were some other interesting comments about this debate. Cassandra Goldie from ACOSS, the main welfare organisation in this country, said:

Australia's employment services system is premised on the notion of mutual obligation. The current policy proposals fail to meet the Government's obligations. Governments have a duty to provide income support and to help people to get a job, while people who are unemployed are required to search for jobs and participate in employment programs. The youth employment measure in the Federal Budget would breach the Government's income support obligation by providing support for only six months a year in many cases. At the same time, Government investment in employment assistance—what the previous speaker described as 'hand-outs'—is inadequate, at only half the OECD average (0.3% compared to 0.6%).

I remember that, when Peter Costello was the treasurer of this country, he used to lampoon the opposition by saying that they were comparing this country to Swaziland, Botswana et cetera. Cassandra Goldie and I are comparing employment assistance in this country to the OECD. The level of support for job assistance in this country is half of the OECD advanced economies. She went on to say:

New requirements appear to be designed to make unemployment unattractive rather than assist people obtaining employment. There is too much activity for activity's sake and not enough flexible investment in what works such as wage subsidies and vocational training relevant to the labour market. The proposed expansion of the Work for the Dole program is likely to be expensive and ineffective. At least $1,500 per person is being invested in this program despite less one in four jobseekers getting a job after Work for the Dole. So there is more to this debate than to come in here and talk about penalty rates, union power and deregulating labour markets. The reality was that, under the previous Howard government, there was no correlation between employment levels and the deregulation of the labour market that occurred at that time. It was not that A led to B. There was no correlation whatsoever. If people care to do some research, rather than just come in and make doctrinal or ideological speeches, they might find that out.

I want to very much go on the record appreciating significant numbers of people in my electorate who are concerned at the low level of payments which the young people are receiving and the fact that there are going to be draconian measures, with people wasting their time by running around the factories around the place in Ingleburn and Macquarie Fields looking for jobs that are non-existent, and that the government is denying them proper training and abandoning very useful and effective previous schemes. Finally, all of this policy by this government is in the context of a government that has increased unemployment. In the previous few years, everything was going to be solved by the abolition of the carbon tax and there were going to be jobs flowing through the streets et cetera. The government totally deny the financial crisis and the unpredicted international crises that the previous government had...
to face, which were overcome by very significant stimulation measures by the previous government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Andrews): There being no further speakers, the debate is adjourned and the resumption of debate will be made in order of the day for the next sitting.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:14
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Prime Minister
(Question No. 137)

Mr Danby asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 13 May 2014:
On (a) how many occasions, and (b) what date(s), has the Minister met with Australian Water Holdings Pty Ltd chief executive Mr Nick Di Girolamo, and can the Minister provide the nature of each meeting.

Mr Abbott: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Nil meetings.

Environmental Conservation
(Question No. 211)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 14 July 2014:
(1) Is he aware of the 'Save Our Shorebirds' online petition.
(2) What action is the Government taking to:
   (a) establish a Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds, and
   (b) develop a national wetlands policy that takes into account the cumulative effects of multiple threats to Australia's shorebirds.

Mr Hunt: The answers to the honourable member's questions are as follows:
(1) Yes. BirdLife Australia launched a 'Farewell Shorebirds' National Campaign on 10 April 2014 to coincide with the northward departure of migratory shorebirds. The campaign ran for four weeks and included a number of community events aimed at raising the profile of Australia's migratory shorebirds, including an online petition 'Save our Shorebirds'. The petition called on the Australian Government to develop: a strong national wetlands policy that takes into account the cumulative impacts of multiple threats; a new Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds that makes a strong commitment to the protection of a network of important shorebird habitat in Australia and throughout the East-Asian–Australasian Flyway; and, a strategy to engage our international partners in the protection of habitat important to the survival of Australia's migratory shorebirds. At the end of the campaign, approximately 700 people had signed the online petition.

(2) (a) Under section 285 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) wildlife conservation plans may be prepared for the purposes of protection, conservation and management of listed migratory, marine, cetacean or conservation dependant species. The current Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds came into effect in February 2006. A review in 2013 recommended the plan be updated to outline a national framework identifying research and management actions to protect migratory shorebirds. In preparing the revised plan, the Department held two workshops with stakeholders in April 2014. State and territory government officials were further involved in development of the draft plan through the Ramsar Implementation Committee (formally known as the Wetlands and Waterbirds Taskforce). The new draft plan incorporates input from these meetings.

The new draft Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds covers 37 species that regularly and predictably visit Australia, and will shortly be released for a statutory three-month period of public consultation. Once public consultation is completed, the Threatened Species Scientific Committee will consider a final draft plan prior to its submission for Ministerial approval.

(b) In Australia many different organisations and individuals have responsibility for managing wetlands and the shorebirds and other species they support. The Australian Government's role is
established primarily by obligations under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention). Consistent with the Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan, the Department has canvassed the views of states and territories and other stakeholders on issues that may benefit from the development of a national wetlands policy. Consideration is now being given to the role of a national policy in furthering Australia’s implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the context of other measures already in place at the national, state and local levels.

**Apprenticeships**
(Question No. 214)

Mr Zappia asked the Minister for Industry, in writing, on 14 July 2014:

How many apprentices completed their apprenticeship in 2013-14, and of those, how many secured work within their skill set on completion?

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

**Australian Apprentice completions in 2013-14**

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research collects data on Australian Apprentice completions, which is made publicly available at www.ncver.edu.au.

Completions data is only currently available for the first half of the 2013-2014 financial years. Data for all 2013-14 apprentice completions will become available in December 2014.

**Australian Apprentice destination data**

Destination data for Apprentice graduates is also collected by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research and reported annually in their publication Student Outcomes.

Student Outcomes 2013 has recently been released and represents the outcomes for 75,000 students studying in the VET system, including Australian Apprentices, during 2012. It is also available from the NCVER website listed above.

**Building Multicultural Communities Program**
(Question No. 234)

Ms Rowland asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 15 July 2014:

In respect of Stream 1 funding for the Building Multicultural Communities Program, (a) what was the: (i) total number of applicants, and (ii) name of each applicant, (b) what was the: (i) total number of successful applicants, and (ii) name, (iii) location, and (iv) electorate, of each successful applicant, (c) what sum of funding did each successful applicant received, and for what purpose, and (d) what total number of applicants are awaiting funding, and what is the name of each applicant awaiting funding.

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) (i), (b) (i), (b) (ii) and (b) (iii) Information about grant applicants approved by the former Minister for Multicultural Affairs in August 2013 is available at: http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/grants

(ii) See above, the Department does not provide details of unsuccessful applicants.

(b) (iv) The Department did not record the electorate of successful applicants.

(c) See the response to (a) (i), (b) (i), (b) (ii) and (b) (iii) above.

See also the answer to Question on Notice 912 relating to the 2014-15 Budget Estimates Hearings of the Senate Community Affairs Committee, regarding details of Stream 1 organisations that received funding, the amount of funding and the date on which funding payment was processed by the Department.

(d) No organisations are awaiting funding.
Building Multicultural Communities Program
(Question No. 235)

Ms Rowland asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 15 July 2014:

In respect of Stream 2 funding for the Building Multicultural Communities Program (a) what was the: (i) total number of applicants, and (ii) name of each applicant, (b) what was the: (i) total number of successful applicants, and (ii) name, (iii) location, and (iv) electorate, of each successful applicant, (c) what sum of funding did each successful applicant received, and for what purpose, and (d) what total number of applicants are awaiting funding, and what is the name of each applicant awaiting funding.

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(a) (i), (b) (i), (b) (ii) and (b) (iii) Information about grant applicants approved by the former Minister for Multicultural Affairs in August 2013 is available at: http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/grants;
(ii) See above, the Department does not provide details of unsuccessful applicants.
(b) (iv) The Department did not record the electorate of successful applicants.
(c) See the response to (a) (i), (b) (i), (b) (ii) and (b) (iii) above.
(d) No organisations are awaiting funding.

Budget: Deregulatory Savings
(Question No. 238)

Mr Burke asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 16 July 2014:

What is the amount of deregulatory savings achieved as a result of the measures in the 2014-15 budget.

Mr Abbott: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The Government will provide an update to Parliament of progress against its target, which will include the deregulatory savings achieved as a result of measures in the 2014-15 Budget, at the 2014 Spring Repeal Day.

Defence: Civilian Staff
(Question No. 240)

Ms Brodtmann asked the Assistant Minister for Defence, in writing, on 17 July 2014:

In respect of civilian staff in the Minister's department (including the Defence Materiel Organisation) as at 30 June 2014, (a) what was the (i) headcount, and (ii) breakdown of the headcount, by division, and (b) how many were (i) on fixed term contracts, (ii) part-time, (iii) based in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), and (iv) based outside the ACT, and where.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(a) and (b) The civilian staff headcount and breakdown by State and Defence Group is provided in the table below. The total Australian Public Service (APS) workforce by actual headcount was 21,193, of which 93 employees were on fixed-term contracts and 1,352 were part time.

Note that these figures are based on headcount data, rather than full-time equivalents (FTE). Defence budgets for its APS workforce on a FTE (ie paid) basis. Headcount data counts all personnel equally regardless of the number of hours worked, and includes all personnel recorded as on duty, or on leave with or without pay.

By way of comparison, the Defence APS workforce by actual FTE as at 30 June 2014 was 19,998.
### Civilian Staff by State and Group as at 30 June 2014

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Intelligence & Security | 130 | 13
Navy | 23 | 1
VCDF | 410 | 4 | 24
VIC Total | 4,141 | 49 | 219

WA | Air Force | 18 | 1
Army | 55 | 3
Chief Finance Officer | 15
Chief Information Officer | 13
Chief Operating Officer | 2
Def Science & Technology Org | 44 | 5
Defence Materiel Organisation | 206 | 4
Defence People Group | 16 | 4
Defence Support & Reform Group | 80 | 5
Intelligence & Security | 22
Joint Operations Command | 2 | 1
Navy | 28 | 6
VCDF | 74 | 3
WA Total | 575 | 32

O/SEAS | Chief Finance Officer | 1
Chief Information Officer | 1
Def Science & Technology Org | 26
Defence Materiel Organisation | 34
Intelligence & Security | 42
Navy | 1
Secretary/CDF | 14
O/SEAS Total | 119

Grand Total | 21,193 | 93 | 1,352

**Defence: Personnel Headcount**

(Question No. 242)

Ms Brodtmann asked the Assistant Minister for Defence, in writing, on 17 July 2014:

For each electoral division as at 30 June 2014, and as contained in the final pay figures for the final quarter for 2013-14 within the Defence People Group of the Minister's department, what was the (a) personnel headcount for (i) the Navy, (ii) the Army, (iii) the Air Force, (iv) civilians, and (v) Reserves, and (b) number of civilians (i) on fixed-term contracts, and (ii) employed part-time.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) (i) to (v) The personnel headcount as at 30 June 2014 for Navy, Army, Air Force, Reserves and APS for each electoral division is provided in Table A below. The total Australian Public Service (APS) workforce by actual headcount was 21,193, of which 93 employees were on fixed-term contracts and 1,352 were part time.

Note that these figures are based on headcount data, rather than full-time equivalents (FTE). Defence budgets for its APS workforce on a FTE (ie paid) basis. Headcount data counts all personnel equally
regardless of the number of hours worked, and includes all personnel recorded as on duty, or on leave with or without pay.

By way of comparison, the Defence APS workforce by actual FTE as at 30 June 2014 was 19,998.

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Note:
1. 'CFTS' denotes Reservists on Continuous Full-Time Service.
2. The electorate of Lingiari is located in the Northern Territory. It is also listed against Western Australia (WA) as it includes the Cocos Islands and Christmas Island, which are geographically located in WA.
(b) (i) – (ii) - The numbers of civilians (by headcount) on fixed-term contracts or employed part time as at 30 June 2014 are provided in Table B below.

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<th>Part Time</th>
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</table>

| WA | Brand | 23 | |
| Curtin | 3 | | |
| Durack | 2 | | |
| Fremantle | 3 | | |
| Pearce | 1 | | |
| WA Total | 32 | | |
| Total | 93 | 1352 | |

Note: For both tables, electorates not listed indicate there were no Defence employees working in that electoral division.

**Building Multicultural Communities Program**

(Question No. 243)

**Ms Rowland** asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 17 July 2014:

Can the Minister provide a full list of details in respect of the letter of offer to: (a) 337 Stream 1, and (b) 133 Stream 2, applicants, for funding under the Building Multicultural Communities Program, including the: (i) name, (ii) location, and (iii) electoral division, of each applicant, and the (iv) sum offered, and (v) purpose of funding.

**Mr Andrews:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) and (b) (i), (ii), (iv), (v) Information about grant applicants approved by the former Minister for Multicultural Affairs in August 2013 is available at: http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/grants

(b) (iv) The Department did not record the electorate of successful applicants.

(Question No. 244)

**Ms Rowland** asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 17 July 2014:

Is it a fact that 66 organisations were offered both Stream 1 and Stream 2 funding under the Building Multicultural Communities Program; if so, can he provide a full list of details on each applicant, including their: (a) name, (b) location, and (c) electoral division, and the (d) sum offered, and (e) purpose of funding.

**Mr Andrews:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a), (b), (d) and (e) Information about grant applicants approved by the former Minister for Multicultural Affairs in August 2013 is available at: http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/grants

(c) The Department did not record the electorate of successful applicants.
Building Multicultural Communities Program  
(Question No. 245)

Ms Rowland asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 17 July 2014:

Is it a fact that on 27 February 2014 only two organisations had completed the execution of the funding agreement for Stream 2 of the Building Multicultural Communities Program; if so, which two, and on what date was their paper work received by his department.

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Yes. The two organisations were ACT Scouts and the Canberra Islamic Centre.

On 9 September 2013 and 6 September 2013, the Department received funding agreements signed by these organisations respectively.

Building Multicultural Communities Program  
(Question No. 246)

Ms Rowland asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 17 July 2014:

(1) Has his department prepared a reply to my letter to the Senator for New South Wales dated 1 April 2014 in respect of funding under the Building Multicultural Communities Program for: (a) the Islamic Centre of Newcastle, and (b) Northern Settlement Services; if so, when was it: (i) drafted, and (ii) sent; if not, why not.

(2) In respect of Stream 1 of the Building Multicultural Communities Program, has (a) the Islamic Centre of Newcastle now received its grant of $9,722.00, and (b) Northern Settlement Services received its grant of $7,600.00; if so, on what date; if not, why not.

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services has responded to this letter. The response provided information relating to the Islamic Centre of Newcastle and Northern Settlement Services.

Building Multicultural Communities Program  
(Question No. 247)

Ms Rowland asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 17 July 2014:

When will the Minister for Social Services provide the list of all organisations that would: (a) receive, and (b) not receive, funding (including the amount for (a)) under the Building Multicultural Communities Program, as requested by me at a private briefing by his department on 11 February 2014.

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) and (b) See Hansard, Community Affairs Legislation Committee, Thursday 5 June 2014, page 76. The referenced Freedom of Information request was finalised on 10 July 2014.

Minister for Employment  
(Question No. 276)

Mr Brendan O'Connor asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 26 August 2014:

In respect of his planned lunch with Dr Angela Lanfranchi, Louise Kirk and representatives of the Latin American Alliance for the Family, (a) where was it to be hosted, (b) what was the anticipated cost, and was the cost to be met by his department, (c) who was invited, and which organisations did they represent, (d) what was the order of arrangements, (e) what was the proposed menu, and (f) were any gifts to be provided to guests.
Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable Member’s question:

Standing Order 98(c) of the House of Representatives provides that a Minister can only be questioned on the following matters, for which he or she is responsible or officially connected:
(i) public affairs;
(ii) administration; or
(iii) proceedings pending in the House.

This question does not fall within those definitions.

ADF Family Health Program
(Question No. 283)

Ms Brodtmann asked the Assistant Minister for Defence, in writing, on 27 August 2014:

In respect of the National ADF Family Health Program, (a) how many families were registered as at 30 June 2014, and how many individuals were covered by these registrations, (b) what out of pocket health costs will be covered under the program, and (c) is the program exempt from proposed co-payments that will apply to some Medicare Benefits Schedule items.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) As at 30 June 2014 there were 13,896 ADF families who were registered for the National ADF Family Health Program with a total of 32,714 individual ADF dependants registered.

(b) The National ADF Family Health Program has two components as follows:

(i) The Medical component covers the gap between what the General Practitioner charges and the Medicare Benefit Schedule (MBS) Rebate that the dependant receives. This component is for all MBS items provided in a general practice setting. There is no cap on the medical component.

(ii) The Allied Health and Specialist component provides $400 per dependant, per Financial Year towards a range of allied health vocational groups and/or to cover the gap between the practitioner fee and the MBS Rebate for services provided by a specialist practitioner. This allocation can be shared between registered dependants of the same family.

(c) The proposed MBS co-payment payment will be covered by the National ADF Family Health Program for registered dependants.

China: Australia Week
(Question No. 300)

Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Trade and Investment, in writing, on 1 September:

What sum is allocated for Australia Week in China in: (a) 2014-15, (b) 2015-16, (c) 2016-17, and (d) 2017-18.

Mr Robb: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

These allocations are shown on page 91 of the 2014-15 Portfolio Budget Statements.

Infrastructure and Regional Development: Speech and Media Training
(Question No. 302)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 1 September 2014:

In respect of speech and/or media training since 7 September 2013, (a) what total sum has the Minister's Department spent, and (b) what is the breakdown for such training for the (i) Minister, (ii)
Minister's staff, and where applicable, each (iii) junior Minister (including Assistant Ministers), (iv) junior (and Assistant) Minister's staff, (v) Parliamentary Secretary, and (vi) Parliamentary Secretary's staff, and (c) what services were provided and by whom.

**Mr Truss:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) Nil.
(b) N/A.
(c) N/A.

**Department of Industry: Speech and Media Training**

(Question No. 311)

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister for Industry, in writing, on 1 September 2014:

In respect of speech and/or media training since 7 September 2013, (a) what total sum has the Minister's department spent, and (b) what is the breakdown for such training for the (i) Minister, (ii) Minister's staff, and where applicable, each (iii) junior Minister (including Assistant Ministers), (iv) junior (and Assistant) Minister's staff, (v) Parliamentary Secretary, and (vi) Parliamentary Secretary's staff, and (c) what services were provided, and by whom.

**Mr Ian Macfarlane:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Department has not spent any funds on speech or media training for the Minister, Minister's staff, Parliamentary Secretary or the Parliamentary Secretary's staff since 7 September 2013.

**Minister for Defence: Drinks Cabinet for Ministers**

(Question No. 333)

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 3 September 2014:

Since 7 September 2013, has the Minister's department paid for or stocked the 'drinks cabinet' for (a) the Minister, and where applicable, each (b) junior Minister (including Assistant Ministers), and (c) Parliamentary Secretary; if so, at what cost.

**Ms Julie Bishop:** The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

No.