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SITTING DAYS—2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>12, 13, 14, 25, 26, 27, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIFTH 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—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,
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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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott, The Hon. Anthony John</td>
<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanese, The Hon. Anthony Norman</td>
<td>Grayndler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexander, Mr John Gilbert OAM</td>
<td>Bennelong, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Mrs Karen Lesley</td>
<td>McPherson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
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<td>Andrews, The Hon. Kevin James</td>
<td>Menzies, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baldwin, The Hon. Robert Charles</td>
<td>Paterson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bandt, Mr Adam Paul</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>AG</td>
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<td>Billson, The Hon. Bruce Fredrick</td>
<td>Dunkley, VIC</td>
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<td>Bird, The Hon. Sharon Leah</td>
<td>Cunningham, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bishop, The Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen</td>
<td>Mackellar, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Bishop, The Hon. Julie Isabel</td>
<td>Curtin, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>McMahon, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Briggs, The Hon. Jamie Edward</td>
<td>Mayo, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broad, Mr Andrew John</td>
<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan</td>
<td>McMillan, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brodtmann, Ms Gai Marie</td>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brough, The Hon. Malcolm Thomas</td>
<td>Fisher, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Buchholz, Mr Scott</td>
<td>Wright, QLD</td>
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<td>Burke, Ms Anna Elizabeth</td>
<td>Chisholm, VIC</td>
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<td>Watson, NSW</td>
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<td>Butler, The Hon. Mark Christopher</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Butler, Ms Terri Megan</td>
<td>Griffith, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Holt, VIC</td>
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<td>Rankin, QLD</td>
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<td>Champion, Mr Nicholas David</td>
<td>Wakefield, SA</td>
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<td>Chester, The Hon. Darren</td>
<td>Gippsland, VIC</td>
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<td>Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie</td>
<td>Bendigo, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Christensen, Mr George Robert</td>
<td>Dawson, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Ciobo, The Hon. Steven Michele</td>
<td>Moncrieff, QLD</td>
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<td>Clare, The Hon. Jason Dean</td>
<td>Blaxland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine</td>
<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Cobb, The Hon. John Kenneth</td>
<td>Calare, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman, Mr David Bernard</td>
<td>Banks, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collins, The Hon. Julie Maree</td>
<td>Franklin, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin</td>
<td>Charlton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Coulton, Mr Mark Maclean</td>
<td>Parkes, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Danby, The Hon. Michael</td>
<td>Melbourne Ports, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Dreyfus, The Hon. Mark Alfred QC</td>
<td>Islaacs, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dutton, The Hon. Peter Craig</td>
<td>Dickson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Elliott, The Hon. Maria Justine</td>
<td>Richmond, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Ellis, The Hon. Katherine Margaret</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Entsch, The Hon. Warren George</td>
<td>Leichhardt, QLD</td>
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<td>Feeney, The Hon. David</td>
<td>Batman, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Ferguson, Mr Laurie Donald Thomas</td>
<td>Werriwa, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fitzgibbon, The Hon. Joel Andrew</td>
<td>Hunter, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Fletcher, The Hon. Paul William</td>
<td>Bradfield, NSW</td>
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<td>Frydenberg, The Hon. Joshua Anthony</td>
<td>Kooyong, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Gambaro, The Hon. Teresa</td>
<td>Brisbane, QLD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Giles, Mr Andrew James</td>
<td>Scullin, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Gillespie, Dr David Arthur</td>
<td>Lyne, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald</td>
<td>Moore, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Gray, The Hon. Gary AO</td>
<td>Brand, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Bruce, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Griggs, Mrs Natasha Louise</td>
<td>Solomon, NT</td>
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<td>Hall, Ms Jill Griffiths</td>
<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Hartsuyker, The Hon. Luke</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Hawke, Mr Alexander George</td>
<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
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<td>Hayes, Mr Christopher Patrick</td>
<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Henderson, Ms Sarah Moya</td>
<td>Corangamite, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hendy, Dr Peter William</td>
<td>Eden-Monaro, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hocke, The Hon. Joseph Benedict</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hogan, Mr Kevin John</td>
<td>Page, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howarth, Mr Luke Ronald</td>
<td>Petrie, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunt, The Hon. Gregory Andrew</td>
<td>Flinders, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Husie, The Hon. Edham Nurreedin</td>
<td>Chifley, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hutchinson, Mr Eric Russell</td>
<td>Lyons, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irons, Mr Stephen James</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jensen, Dr Dennis Geoffrey</td>
<td>Tangney, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Ewen Thomas</td>
<td>Herbert, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Jones, Mr Stephen Patrick</td>
<td>Throsby, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Kennedy, QLD</td>
<td>AUS</td>
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<td>Keenan, The Hon. Michael</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kelly, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>King, The Hon. Catherine Fiona</td>
<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laming, Mr Andrew</td>
<td>Bowman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landry, Ms Michelle Leanne</td>
<td>Capricornia, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Reid, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Leigh, The Hon. Dr Andrew Keith</td>
<td>Fraser, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Ley, The Hon. Susan Penelope</td>
<td>Farrer, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Macfarlane, The Hon. Ian Elgin</td>
<td>Groom, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Macklin, The Hon. Jennifer Louise</td>
<td>Jagajaga, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>MacTierman, The Hon. Alannah Joan Geraldine Cecilia</td>
<td>Perth, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marino, Ms Nola Bethwyn</td>
<td>Forrest, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Markus, Mrs Louise Elizabeth</td>
<td>Macquarie, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marles, The Hon. Richard Donald</td>
<td>Corio, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matheson, Mr Russell Glenn</td>
<td>Macarthur, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>McCormack, The Hon. Michael Francis</td>
<td>Riverina, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Dobell, NSW</td>
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<td>McEwen, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morrison, The Hon. Scott John</td>
<td>Cook, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neumann, The Hon. Shayne Kenneth</td>
<td>Blair, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nikolic, Mr Andrew Alexander AM, CSC</td>
<td>Bass, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>O'Connor, The Hon. Brendan Patrick John</td>
<td>Gorton, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>O'Dowd, Mr Kenneth Desmond</td>
<td>Flynn, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<td>--------</td>
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<td>O'Dwyer, The Hon. Ms Kelly Megan</td>
<td>Higgins, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>O'Neil, Ms Clare Ellen</td>
<td>Hotham, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owens, Ms Julie</td>
<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer, Mr Clive Frederick</td>
<td>Fairfax QLD</td>
<td>PUP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parke, The Hon. Melissa</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasin, Mr Antony</td>
<td>Barker, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pitt, Mr Keith John</td>
<td>Hinkler, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plibersek, The Hon. Tanya Joan</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter, The Hon. Charles Christian</td>
<td>Pearce, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice, Mrs Jane</td>
<td>Ryan, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price, Ms Melissa Lee</td>
<td>Durack, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyne, The Hon. Christopher Maurice</td>
<td>Sturt, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Randall, Mr Don James</td>
<td>Canning, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ripoll, The Hon. Bernard Fernando</td>
<td>Oxley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Rishworth, The Hon. Amanda Louise</td>
<td>Kingston, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Robb, The Hon. Andrew John AO</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Robert, The Hon. Stuart Rowland</td>
<td>Fadden, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne</td>
<td>Greenway, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Roy, Mr Wyatt</td>
<td>Longman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Ruddock, The Hon. Philip Maxwell</td>
<td>Berowra, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine</td>
<td>Lalor, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Scott, The Hon. Bruce Craig</td>
<td>Maranoa, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Scott, Ms Fiona Meryl</td>
<td>Lindsay, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Shorten, The Hon. William Richard</td>
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<td>LP</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Stone, The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy</td>
<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
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<td>Sudmalis, Ms Ann Elizabeth</td>
<td>Deakin, VIC</td>
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<td>Lilley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Hume, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Taylor, Mr Angus James</td>
<td>Wannon, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Tehan, Mr Daniel Thomas (Dan)</td>
<td>Kingsford Smith, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Thistlethwaite, Mr Matthew James</td>
<td>Wills, VIC</td>
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<td>Wentworth, NSW</td>
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<td>Calwell, VIC</td>
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<td>Forde, QLD</td>
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<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watts, Mr Timothy Graham</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Robertson, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
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<td>Williams, Mr Matthew</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
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<td>O’Connor, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
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<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
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<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## 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
# ABBOTT MINISTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Charles Porter MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<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>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
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<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Joshua Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td>SENSOR the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
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<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry and Science</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science</td>
<td>SENSOR the Hon. Karen Andrews MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>SENSOR the Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</strong></td>
<td>SENSOR the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ANZAC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Minister for Communications</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Environment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Finance</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Sport</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans' Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>SHADOW MINISTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Graham Perrett MP</td>
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<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Catherine King MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health</td>
<td>Nick Champion MP</td>
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<td>Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
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<td>Senator Carol Brown</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hon Brendan O'Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Services</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS

MONDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2015

Chamber
BUSINESS—
   Rearrangement .................................................................................................................. 1
PETITIONS—
   Centrelink .......................................................................................................................... 2
PETITIONS—
   Responses ............................................................................................................................ 2
   Climate Change ...................................................................................................................... 2
   Genetically Modified Crops ................................................................................................... 3
   Telecommunications .............................................................................................................. 3
   Higher Education .................................................................................................................. 4
   Bruck Textile Technologies .................................................................................................... 5
   Prime Minister ...................................................................................................................... 6
PETITIONS—
   Statements ........................................................................................................................... 7
PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS—
   China-Australia Free Trade Agreement ............................................................................... 8
   Syrian Refugees ..................................................................................................................... 16
MOTIONS—
   Sydney: Martin Place Siege ................................................................................................. 21
PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS—
   Syrian Refugees .................................................................................................................... 25
   Medicines and Medical Devices ........................................................................................... 27
   Municipal and Essential Services Program ............................................................................ 35
BILLS—
   Customs Amendment (Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014—
   Customs Tariff Amendment (Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014—
   Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014—
   Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges (Amendment) Bill 2014—
   Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014—
   Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Bill 2014—
   Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill 2014—
   Social Security Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Job Seeker Compliance Framework) Bill 2014—
   ACT Government Loan Bill 2014—
   Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (2014 Measures No. 6) Bill 2014—
   Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2014—
   Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014—
   Assent ................................................................................................................................... 40
CONTENTS—continued

COMMITTEES—
  Intelligence and Security Committee—
    Report.............................................................................. 40
  Corporations and Financial Services Committee—
    Report.............................................................................. 42

BILLS—
  Fair Work Amendment (Bargaining Processes) Bill 2014—
    Second Reading................................................................. 43
    Consideration in Detail .................................................... 56
    Third Reading..................................................................... 56

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
  Queensland State Election..................................................... 56
  Fuel Prices........................................................................... 57
  Irish World Cup Cricket Team............................................... 57
  Australia Day ....................................................................... 57
  Country Basketball League.................................................. 58
  Fuel Prices........................................................................... 58
  Fuel Prices........................................................................... 59
  Remote School Attendance Strategy....................................... 59
  Grete, Mr Peter ..................................................................... 60
  Barton Electorate: Chinese New Year..................................... 60
  Muddiman, Ms Susi, OAM..................................................... 61
  Solomon Electorate: Education............................................. 61
  Thompson, Mr Neil............................................................... 62
  Bory, Ms Eva........................................................................ 62
  Abbott Government.............................................................. 62
  Bass Electorate: Festivale...................................................... 63
  Parramatta Electorate: Holroyd Community Aid................... 63
  Hughes Electorate: Chinese New Year................................. 64
  Newcastle Electorate: Wollotuka Yarning Circle................. 64
  Petrie Electorate: Boundary Road Overpass.......................... 65

CONDOLENCES—
  Fitzgibbon, Mr Eric John—
  Uren, Hon. Thomas, AC—
  Enderby, Hon. Keppel Earl, QC—
    Reference to Federation Chamber..................................... 72
  McCullough, Dr Colleen Margaretta, AO—
    Reference to Federation Chamber..................................... 73

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS.................................................. 73

CONDOLENCES—
  Wright, Mr Keith Webb....................................................... 75

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
  Prime Minister.................................................................... 75
  Economy ............................................................................... 76
  Budget ................................................................................ 77
  New Colombo Plan............................................................... 77
CONTENTITIES—continued

Abbott Government................................................................. 78
DISTINGUISHED VISITORS.................................................. 78
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
  Higher Education .................................................................. 78
  Budget .................................................................................. 79
  Minister for Communications ................................................ 80
  Broadband ............................................................................. 80
MOTIONS—
  Prime Minister .................................................................... 82
AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS ............................................. 90
PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE HOLDERS—
  Speaker's Panel .................................................................... 90
PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS .................................................. 90
BILLS—
  Biosecurity Bill 2014—
  Biosecurity (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014—
  Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Amendment Bill 2014—
  Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Amendment Bill 2014—
  Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Amendment Bill 2014—
    Second Reading .................................................................. 91
    Third Reading ...................................................................... 144
  Biosecurity (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014—
    Second Reading .................................................................. 145
    Third Reading ...................................................................... 145
  Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Amendment Bill 2014—
    Second Reading .................................................................. 145
    Third Reading ...................................................................... 145
  Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Amendment Bill 2014—
    Second Reading .................................................................. 145
    Third Reading ...................................................................... 145
  Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Amendment Bill 2014—
    Second Reading .................................................................. 146
    Third Reading ...................................................................... 146
  Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014—
  Crimes Legislation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth and Other Measures) Bill 2014—
    Returned from Senate .......................................................... 146
  Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014—
    Second Reading .................................................................. 146
ADJOURNMENT—
  Pensions and Benefits .......................................................... 160
  Regional Development ......................................................... 162
  Freedom of Information ......................................................... 163
  Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 .................. 164
  Kingsford Smith Electorate: Malabar Headland .......................... 165
CONTENTS—continued

Economy .................................................................................................................. 167
NOTICES .................................................................................................................. 167

Federation Chamber
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS—
Uren, Hon. Thomas, AC ......................................................................................... 170
Sydney Electorate: Millers Point ........................................................................... 170
Hinkler Electorate .................................................................................................. 170
Queensland State Election .................................................................................... 171
Macarthur Electorate: National Volunteer Awards .............................................. 172
Centenary of Anzac ............................................................................................... 173
Durack Electorate: Kimberley Group Training Skills Centre .............................. 174
Adams, Mr Victor Joseph ....................................................................................... 175
Gilmore Electorate .................................................................................................. 175
Australia Day Honours: Batty, Ms Rosemary 'Rosie' ........................................... 176

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS—
Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month ..................................................................... 177
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park ............................................................................ 187
Reclink National Program Funding ....................................................................... 196
Canned Hunting ..................................................................................................... 200

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
Scullin Electorate: Adviceline Injury Lawyers .................................................... 209
Durack Electorate: Pilbara Womens Network ...................................................... 209
Shortland Electorate: Lake Macquarie Volunteer of the Year ............................... 210
Hume Electorate: Australia Day Honours ............................................................ 210
Parramatta Electorate: Australia Day Honours ................................................... 210
Murray Electorate: Youth Unemployment ............................................................. 211
Braddon Electorate: First World War Commemorations ..................................... 211
Shortland Electorate: Youth of the Year ............................................................... 212
Edwardstown Meals on Wheels ........................................................................... 212
National Information Centre on Retirement Investments ..................................... 213
O'Connor Electorate: Bushfires ............................................................................ 213
Parramatta Electorate: Australia Day .................................................................... 214
Barton Electorate: 24th Greek Epiphany Ceremony and Blessing of the Waters ... 214
Liberal Party Leadership ....................................................................................... 214
Ryan Electorate: Fig Tree Farmers Markets ......................................................... 215
Mallee Electorate: Christian Emergency Food Centre .......................................... 215
Blair Electorate: Volunteer and Club Sign on Day ............................................... 216
JBS Swift-Primo Merger ....................................................................................... 216
Fraser Electorate: United Nations Youth Australia ............................................... 217
Robertson Electorate: St Joseph's Workshop ....................................................... 217
Bruce Electorate: Community Groups ................................................................. 217
Queensland State Election ................................................................................... 218
Beard, Dr Alan, OAM ........................................................................................... 218
Burger, Mr Kevin .................................................................................................. 218
Summerfield, Ms Paula ......................................................................................... 219
Blair Electorate: Rosewood ................................................................................... 219
CONTENTS—continued

Joseph Banks Secondary College ................................................................. 220
South Australian Government .................................................................... 220
Berger, Mr Kevin ......................................................................................... 221
Clarke, Ms Norma ....................................................................................... 221
Rumball, Mr John ......................................................................................... 221
Sulman, Ms Margaret ................................................................................... 221
Fitzgibbon, Mr Eric John ............................................................................. 221
Canned Hunting ......................................................................................... 222

GRIEVANCE DEBATE—
Queensland State Government .................................................................. 225
Competition Policy ....................................................................................... 228
Shortland Electorate: Budget ....................................................................... 230
Baseball ........................................................................................................ 232
Hunter Region: Economy ............................................................................ 234
Fuel Prices ................................................................................................. 237

Questions In Writing
Department of the Treasury: Staff Redundancy—(Question No. 273) ........... 240
Social Services: Building Multicultural Communities Program—(Question No. 277) .... 240
Communications: Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Special Broadcasting
  Services—(Question No. 284) ..................................................................... 240
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Hospitality—(Question No. 347) ........ 241
Department of Human Services: Secondments—(Question No. 377) .......... 241
Media Monitoring and Clipping Services—(Question No.391) ................. 242
Prime Minister and Cabinet: Commonwealth Grants—(Question No. 414) ........ 242
Department of the Treasury: Commonwealth Grants—(Question No. 419) ...... 242
Department of the Environment: Commonwealth Grants—(Question No. 429) .... 243
Attorney-General's Department: Staff Overseas Travel—(Question No. 435) ....... 243
Attorney-General's Department: Corporate Credit Cards—(Question No. 454) ...... 244
Prime Minister and Cabinet: Staffing—(Question No. 469) ....................... 244
National Broadband Network—(Question No. 471) ..................................... 244
Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development: Chief Executive Officer—
  (Question No. 479)................................................................................ 245
Centrelink and Medicare Call Centres—(Question No. 481) ..................... 245
Centrelink and Medicare Call Centres—(Question No. 482) ..................... 246
Western Australia: Infrastructure—(Question No. 489) ............................ 246
Brown-Pascoe, Ms Heather—(Question No. 490) ...................................... 247
Brown-Pascoe, Heather Ms—(Question No. 491) ....................................... 247
Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd—(Question No. 492) ......... 248
Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd—(Question No. 497) ......... 249
Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd—(Question No. 498) ......... 249
Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd—(Question No. 499) ......... 249
Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd—(Question No. 500) .......... 250
Infrastructure and Regional Development: Executive Training—(Question No. 503) .... 250
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Executive Training—(Question No. 504) ...... 251
CONTENTS—continued

Attorney-General's Department: Executive Training—(Question No. 505) .................................................. 252
Department of Agriculture: Executive Training—(Question No. 509) .................................................. 252
Education and Training: Executive Training—(Question No. 510) .................................................. 258
Industry: Executive Training—(Question No. 512) .................................................. 258
Social Services: Executive Training—(Question No. 513) .................................................. 258
Human Services: Executive Training—(Question No. 514) .................................................. 259
Department of the Environment: Executive Training—(Question No. 517) .................................................. 259
Department of Veterans' Affairs: Executive Training—(Question No. 519) .................................................. 260
Overseas Travel: Ministers Accompanied With Their Spouse—(Question No. 520) .................................................. 262
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Consultants—(Question No. 522) .................................................. 262
Department of the Treasury: Consultants—(Question No. 527) .................................................. 262
Department of Education: Consultants—(Question No. 530) .................................................. 263
Industry: Consultants—(Question No. 532) .................................................. 263
Social Services: Consultants—(Question No. 533) .................................................. 263
Department of Human Services: Consultants—(Question No. 534) .................................................. 264
Department of Health: Consultants—(Question No. 536) .................................................. 265
Department of Veterans' Affairs: Consultants—(Question No. 539) .................................................. 265
Strategic Centre for Leadership, Learning and Development—(Question No. 540) .................................................. 265
National Injury Insurance Scheme—(Question No. 548) .................................................. 266
Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System—(Question No. 550) .................................................. 267
WestConnex—(Question No. 554) .................................................. 268
WestConnex—(Question No. 555) .................................................. 268
WestConnex—(Question No. 556) .................................................. 268
Sustainable Development Goals—(Question No. 564) .................................................. 268
Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd—(Question No. 565) .................................................. 269
Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd—(Question No. 566) .................................................. 269
Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd—(Question No. 567) .................................................. 269
Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd—(Question No. 568) .................................................. 270
Social Services: Funding—(Question No. 574) .................................................. 270
Employment—(Question Nos 575 and 577) .................................................. 271
Employment—(Question Nos 578, 579, 581 and 582) .................................................. 271
Employment—(Question Nos 583, 584, 586 and 587) .................................................. 272
Employment—(Question Nos 588 and 590) .................................................. 273
Wills and Calwell Electorates: Manufacturing—(Question No. 591) .................................................. 274
Wills and Calwell Electorates: Manufacturing—(Question No. 593) .................................................. 274
North Melbourne Regional Development Australia Report: Manufacturing—(Question No. 594) .................................................. 275
North Melbourne Regional Development Australia Report: Manufacturing—(Question No. 596) .................................................. 276
Migrant worker programs—(Question No. 597) .................................................. 277
Migration—(Question No. 599) .................................................. 277
457 Visas—(Question No. 600) .................................................. 277
Migration—(Question No. 602) .................................................. 278
Victoria: Population Growth—(Question No. 603) .................................................. 278
Population—(Question No. 605) .................................................. 279
Unemployment—(Question No. 606) .................................................. 280
CONTENTS—continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment—(Question No. 609)</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment—(Question No. 611)</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment—(Question No. 612)</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment—(Question No. 614)</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Deregulation: Staff Travel—(Question No. 615)</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barmah National Park: River Red Gum Logging—(Question No. 618)</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevron Scheme—(Question No. 619)</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education: Student Attendance—(Question No. 620)</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Employment—(Question Nos 623 and 625)</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Employment—(Question No. 627)</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment: Accounting—(Question No. 631)</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment—(Question Nos 634, 635 and 637)</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment—(Question Nos 638, 639 and 641)</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment—(Question Nos 642, 643 and 645)</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drought Concessional Loans Scheme—(Question No. 661)</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program—(Question No. 662)</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballast Rehabilitation Program—(Question No. 663)</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Broadband Network—(Question No. 664)</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishing—(Question No. 668)</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System—(Question No. 669)</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger Relationships Trial—(Question No. 670)</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Aid—(Question No. 671)</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBN Co Limited—(Question No. 673)</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Assistance—(Question No. 677)</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Headcount—(Question No. 679)</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Monday, 9 February 2015

The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (10:01): by leave—I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the order of business for today in the House and the Federation Chamber being as follows:

(1) In the House:
   (a) Presentation of petitions and Private Members’ Business as determined by the Selection Committee, to be interrupted at approximately 11am;
   (b) The Prime Minister to move a motion relating to the Martin Place siege and the Leader of the Opposition to reply for an equal period of time;
   (c) At the adjournment of debate on the motion, Private Members' Business to be resumed and to continue until concluded;
   (d) The provisions of standing orders 55(b) and 133(a) in relation to deferred quorums and divisions to apply until the conclusion of Private Members' Business;
   (e) Any divisions or quorums called for between 4.15pm and 5.45pm to be deferred until 5.45pm;
   (f) The order of business for the remainder of the sitting to be as provided for in the standing orders;

(2) In the Federation Chamber:
   (a) Members’ three minute constituency statements;
   (b) The meeting to be suspended at approximately 11.00am for the duration of the debate on the Prime Minister's motion in the House;
   (c) On resumption, Private Members' Business in the order determined by the Selection Committee, until 1.30pm;
   (d) At 4pm, 90 second statements and government business as provided for, until 5.45pm;
   (e) At 5.45pm, Private Members' Business to be resumed and to continue until concluded;
   (f) The order of business for the remainder of the sitting to be as provided for in the standing orders;

(3) Any variation to this arrangement to be made only by a motion moved by a Minister.

I will speak to the motion very briefly. It enables the Prime Minister at 11 am to make a statement to the House, followed by the Leader of the Opposition, about the Martin Place siege that occurred in Sydney. Many members of the families of those who were involved in the siege or, indeed, were victims of the siege are here today. Later in the day the motion allows the House to have no divisions or quorums from 4.15 to 5.45 so that members might, if they wish, go to the War Memorial for the opening of parliament and the particular service that they have on this day. The Manager of Opposition Business and I have been in discussions about both of these matters and they are agreed between the government and the opposition.

Question agreed to.
PETITIONS

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:02): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petition:

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

This petition of a certain citizen of Australia draws to the attention of the House: that Centrelink is the most inefficient bureaucracy this citizen has ever encountered.

We therefore ask the House to: begin the process for investigating the utility of privatising Centrelink into three separate companies, each providing the same services and allowing for free movement of customers between them, with contracts with the Government to pay said companies based on customer assessment of service delivery. We also ask that customer payments remain the exclusive domain of the Government, allowing however for the access to, and assessment of, payments to be the domain of private business, in order to achieve the efficiency that we deserve as Australian citizens. We ask that the investigative process include extensive community consultation among Centrelink customers.

from 1 citizen

Petition received.

PETITIONS

Responses

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:02): Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House have been received as follows:

Climate Change

Dear Dr Jensen

I refer to your letter of 27 October 2014 concerning a petition regarding the reduction of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions recently received by the Standing Committee on Petitions.

The Australian Government is firmly committed to reducing Australia's emissions to meet its target of 5 per cent below 2000 levels by 2020. Positive and direct action by the Government, business and community will allow us to meet this challenge. For environmental policy to be successful over the longer term, the two goals of reducing emissions and ensuring economic growth must be pursued together. The Government's approach is built on science and the need to develop global efforts to reduce emissions.

The centrepiece of the Government's approach is the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF), which embodies the principles of lowest-cost, real emissions reductions, and streamlined administration. The ERF will provide the impetus for businesses and the community to improve practices, invest in new technologies, and reduce our emissions.

On 24 November 2014, a Bill to implement the ERF—the Carbon Farming Initiative Amendment Bill 2014—passed Parliament. It will take effect once proclaimed.

The ERF implements a long-term framework for stable and sustainable climate change policy. It offers strong incentives for businesses to seek out actions that are in their interests as they reduce costs, and in the interests of the environment as they reduce emissions. The ERF will support Australian businesses and communities to enjoy the benefits of economic growth, increased productivity and a cleaner environment.
The Government is also committed to supporting a sustainable renewable energy sector, including through an amended Renewable Energy Target (RET) scheme to achieve a real 20 per cent share for renewables in Australia's electricity mix in 2020.

A review of the RET in 2014 by an independent panel of experts found that electricity demand is declining so forecast demand in 2020 is lower than previously anticipated. This means that what was intended to be a 20 per cent target for 2020 is now tracking towards 26 per cent by 2020.

The Government will continue to seek bipartisan support for an amended RET with a view to providing certainty for the renewable energy sector while better reflecting the market need for new generation and restoring competitiveness to industry.

Further information about the ERF is available on the Department of the Environment's website at: www.environment.gov.au.

I have also copied this letter to the Member for Indi, the Hon Cathy McGowan MP. Thank you for writing on this matter.

from the Minister for the Environment, Mr Hunt

Genetically Modified Crops

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your correspondence of 1 October 2014 requesting a response to the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding a petition on the use of pesticides and genetically modified (GM) crops and their effect on public health (833/1300).

I apologise for not directly responding to the Committee but your letter was referred to the Minister with portfolio responsibility for this matter, the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Barnaby Joyce MP. I understand that Minister Joyce responded to you on 26 March 2014.

I support the response from Minister Joyce to the petition which was coordinated by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture. The Australian Government Department of Health provided input into this response from a public health perspective.

Thank you for raising this matter and I trust that the coordinated response from Minister Joyce assists the House in responding.

from the Minister for Health and Minister for Sport, Mr Dutton

Telecommunications

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your recent letter concerning a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions, regarding mobile phone coverage on the Eyre Peninsula (939/1407).

The Australian Government recognises the importance of reliable mobile coverage. While mobile phone carriers claim to provide coverage to 99 per cent of Australia's population, there are still some areas that have no coverage, particularly in regional and remote locations.

Expanding mobile coverage has clear economic and social benefits, as well as public safety benefits for people living, working and travelling in regional and remote areas.

The Government is investing $100 million to improve mobile phone coverage in some regional and remote communities which do not currently have reliable coverage. The Government's investment is expected to generate at least matching funding from local and state governments, communities and industry.

The Mobile Black Spot Programme will improve coverage along major transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters, as well as addressing unique mobile coverage problems.
The Government accepted nominations for mobile black spot locations between December 2013 and 1 August 2014. The reported locations, including the communities of Poonindie, North Shields and Louth Bay, have been included in a database that will be shared with mobile network operators and infrastructure providers to assist them in preparing funding proposals for the programme. The rules of the programme will require the mobile network operators to specify locations drawn from this database, at which they would propose to build or upgrade base stations.

The mobile black spot database is available: (www.communications.gov.au/mobile_services/mobile_black_spot_programme) as an online interactive map.

The Government intends to commence a competitive selection process shortly, with a view to announcing the locations which have been selected for funding in the first half of 2015.

Thank you for bringing the petition to my attention, I trust this information will be of assistance.

from the Minister for Communications, Mr Turnbull

Higher Education

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 1 September 2014 regarding a recent petition on the Australian Government's proposed changes to the HECS system.

In the 2014-15 Budget the Government announced changes to the HECS loan interest rate to ensure the HECS scheme is sustainable into the future. From 1 June 2016, the Government will replace the current Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate of indexation on HECS loans with the Treasury 10 year bond rate, capped at 6 per cent per annum. This measure will allow the Government to recoup part of the cost of providing HECS loans, which will assist in ensuring that future generations of students can continue to benefit from income-contingent loans.

As more and more Australians pursue higher education, the amount of debt being supported by Australian taxpayers has grown significantly. The Government is currently providing more than $5 billion each year in HECS loans. This is expected to reach $10 billion in 2017.

In a deficit environment, the Government has to borrow and pay interest on the money that it lends to students. The Government currently lends money to students at an interest rate that is less than it costs the Government to borrow the money. The change in indexation of HECS loans will bring indexation more in line with the cost to the Government of borrowing these funds.

Students will continue to be able to defer payment of their student fees through the FMCS scheme and will not be required to make repayments on their HECS debt unless and until their income is above the minimum repayment threshold (which will be $50,637 in 2016-17). Students will still have access to loans at rates far lower than commercial market rates of interest.

In addition, for many students, the changes to indexation will be offset by the fact that they will no longer have to pay an upfront loan fee and will no longer be subject to a lifetime limit on the total amount they can borrow. For more information about the measure to remove the FEE-HELP and VET FEE-HELP loan fee and lifetime loan limit, please see the Study Assist website at www.studyassist.gov.au.

As you would be aware, the Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014 is currently before the Parliament. The Government will continue to consult to ensure the interests of students remain a priority.

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter.

from the Minister for Education, Mr Pyne
Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 2 October 2014 seeking a response to a petition from former Bruck Textile Technologies employees, families and residents in and near the Rural City of Wangaratta. The petition requests that the Government fund all unpaid entitlements for former employees of Bruck Textile Technologies, and requests that the Government consider legislative change relating to the Fair Entitlements Guarantee.

In relation to the first request, it is important to note the background to taxpayer-funded employee entitlement schemes. The Howard Government first established a taxpayer-funded employee entitlement scheme in 2000. Since that time, subsequent governments have supported similar schemes. The current scheme, the Fair Entitlements Guarantee, was established in 2012. A key consideration of the support for employee entitlement schemes has always been whether it is reasonable for taxpayers to guarantee all of an employee's lost entitlements in the event of employer's liquidation.

The Government considers that taxpayer-funded employee entitlement schemes should act as a safety net only, and that it is the employer, not that taxpayer, who should be responsible for employee entitlements. The Government considers that the taxpayer should help out their fellow Australians where appropriate, but that it is unreasonable to expect that the taxpayer should be responsible for all entitlements in the event of an employer's liquidation. This is the responsibility of the employer, and this has remained a core underlying principle of government support for employee entitlement schemes over the past 14 years.

If the taxpayer were to be held responsible for all employee entitlements in the event of liquidation, the Government has serious concerns about the potential for the creation of a moral hazard. That is, a more generous scheme could encourage employers and company directors to adopt generous employment entitlements that were not sustainable to the business. Employers and company directors could deliberately rely on the Australian taxpayer in order to meet obligations for all employee entitlements.

There is evidence that the risk of moral hazard in the scheme is real. The previous Labor government increased the level of redundancy pay that taxpayers would fund from a maximum of 16 weeks to 4 weeks pay for every year of employee service. Since that change claims have soared:

- The proportion of insolvent companies relying on the scheme to meet employment entitlements rose from 16.8 per cent in 2006-07 to 20.5 per cent in 2012-13.
- The proportion of workplace agreements that provided a total maximum redundancy payment of more than 16 weeks rose from 22.3 per cent in Quarter 1, 2011 to 28.3 per cent in Quarter 2, 2014.
- The value of entitlements paid under the scheme for redundancy pay has increased disproportionately compared to other entitlements, accounting for 29.5 per cent of total scheme costs in 2006-07 to 39.6 per cent of total scheme costs in 2012-13.
- Demand in the scheme increased from 8,626 claimants being paid $72.97 million in 2006-07 to 16,019 claimants being paid $261.65 million in 2012-13 (an increase of 259 per cent).

Former employees of Bruck Textile Technologies have now received legislated levels of assistance under the Fair Entitlements Guarantee. The Government does not believe that it is appropriate for taxpayers to provide payments beyond this.

The Fair Entitlements Guarantee is designed to act as a safety net, and a scheme of last resort. Whilst the scheme does not cover all entitlements, there are other avenues for impacted employees to recover these entitlements, and former employees of Bruck Textile Technologies are encouraged to pursue these avenues.
In relation to the second request, the Government also has concerns about companies which do not protect employees’ entitlements, and which trade while insolvent. Legislation already exists to prevent such activities.

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission administers the Corporations Act 2001 to ensure company directors comply with their duties to act with due care and diligence (sections 180 to 184), that companies do not trade while insolvent (section 588G) and that directors do not enter into transactions to avoid employee entitlements (section 596AB). Potential consequences include deregistration, criminal prosecution and, in the case of taxation and superannuation matters, directors can be held personally liable for payments.

Despite this legislation, it is important to emphasise that most company liquidations do not involve corporate misconduct and do not result in employees being left with unpaid entitlements. In 2012-13 there were 10,746 companies entering external administration with 7,690 being wound up through liquidation. In the same year 1,753 new cases were received under the Fair Entitlements Guarantee and its predecessor scheme (less than a quarter of all liquidated companies). Insolvency statistics show that the issue of unpaid employment entitlements only exists in 25 per cent or less of all external administrations.

The corporate conduct of the former directors of Bruck Textile Technologies is currently being investigated and it would be premature to conclude that there has been a breach of corporate duty until such a case has been established under the law.

The Government has a range of programmes to help employees who have been made redundant, including job search activities and support, training to gain further skills, relocation assistance to move to another location for a job and incentives that encourage employers to employ mature age job seekers. Further detail is available on the Department of Employment’s website at www.employment.gov.au.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

from the Minister for Employment, Senator Abetz

Prime Minister

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 20 October 2014, reference number 970/1441, regarding a petition requesting the tabling of a motion of ‘No Confidence’ in the Prime Minister.

Please relay my response to the petitioner as follows.

Any member of the House can, in accordance with the Standing Orders, seek to move a motion expressing ‘no confidence’ in the Prime Minister, or indeed any other Minister. I note that the petitioners have already approached a number of members who have stated a lack of confidence in the Prime Minister, but are not willing to move a no confidence motion because such a motion would not pass the House at the current time, given I and the majority of my colleagues strongly support the Prime Minister and do not agree with the petitioners.

There is no mechanism of the House by which a motion can be moved or tabled without the backing and initiative of an individual member, and thus I am unable to assist the petitioners further.

I encourage the petitioners to visit www.liberal.org.au to see the good work their Coalition government is doing for all Australians.

from the Leader of the House, Mr Pyne
Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:03): Madam Speaker, members' engagement with the petitions process is a vital and longstanding facet of Australian democracy. Indeed, members have a role to play at every stage of the petitioning process. From the early stages when potential petitioners are seeking information on the House and its processes to getting the petition presented in the House and receiving a response, members have a part to play. As Chair of the Petitions Committee, I think it is useful in my first statement of the year to remind members of how they can be involved in bringing petitions to the attention of the House.

Members and their offices are sometimes approached by constituents interested in starting a petition on a matter that is important to them or their community. When assisting with prospective petitions, members should be aware that under standing orders they are not able to sign petitions, nor are they able to act as principal petitioners. Nonetheless, members and their offices can assist petitioners to ensure that draft petitions meet the standing order requirements by pointing petitioners to the Petitions Committee website. I recommend that anyone seeking to petition the House consult the committee website as it contains much useful information on the form petitions should take, including an explanation of the relevant standing orders and a petition template.

After the petition has been prepared and signatures gathered, many petitioners send their petitions to their local member for lodgement with the parliament. I would like to take this opportunity to remind members that when they receive petitions they should submit them to the Petitions Committee for consideration before they present them. It is very important that members do so as any petition presented before being considered by the committee is received as a document until such time as it has been certified as meeting the requirements. This often means there is a delay in referring a petition to the responsible minister.

When presenting petitions on behalf of petitioners, members are drawing the attention of the House and relevant minister to an issue that may be significant in their electorate or to the wider Australian community. In some cases, petitions may be on issues about which the members presenting these may feel strongly, or members may present petitions with which they do not necessarily agree. The act of presenting a petition does not necessarily indicate members endorse its contents. In presenting petitions, members are performing an important democratic function.

Members have a range of options for presenting petitions which are found to meet the requirements—for example, during members' statements in the House, members' constituency statements in the Federation Chamber, adjournment debate in the House and the Federation Chamber, or grievance debate in the Federation Chamber.

When members present petitions, they will be informed of any response received from a minister or any other actions taken. Through their involvement in petitions, not only can members help keep the House informed of important developments in the Australian community but members can also keep themselves informed of developments and issues in their electorates that are important to their constituents. Of course, petitions not presented by
members are presented by me, as Petitions Committee chair, during this timeslot on sitting Mondays.

I would like to finish by encouraging my colleagues to contact the Petitions Committee secretariat when approached by petitioners, particularly before the petitioners begin to gather signatures. The secretariat can provide feedback to the people organising petitions, which can assist them to meet the requirements. In this way, members can act as a conduit between the Petitions Committee and constituents organising petitions, helping to ensure that these constituents get access to the full range of benefits that petitioning the House can bring.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

China-Australia Free Trade Agreement

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (10:08): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the University of Western Sydney (UWS) and the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine (BUCM) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) as part of the landmark China Australia Free Trade Agreement, and the forged relationship will provide:

(i) broader and improved healthcare options as a result of the clinical and research trials conducted by the UWS's National Institute of Complementary Medicine and the BUCM to validate and translate Chinese medicines into an integrated healthcare setting;

(ii) the international framework for Australia to become the leading western accreditor of the $170 billion dollar global traditional Chinese medicine market; and

(iii) formalised connections with the internationally regarded researchers at the BUCM which will further enhance the reputation of the UWS as a leading centre of research excellence that delivers practical social and economic outcomes for the residents of Western Sydney;

(b) the MOU between these two universities was among 14 commercial agreements signed between Australia and China, and will secure unprecedented levels of market access to the world's second largest economy, with a population of 1.36 billion and a rapidly growing middle class; and

(c) households and businesses will also reap the benefits of cheaper goods and components imported from China, placing downward pressure on the cost of living and the cost of doing business; and

(2) commends the Government on its approach to securing a historic free trade agreement between Australia and China.

Today I stand very proud: proud of the community I represent, proud of an innovative university that has gone beyond its reach—a university that sees the future of our great nation. Through our free trade agreement the University of Western Sydney has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. This free trade agreement will open up so much opportunity to the people of Western Sydney. But all too often we hear about the doom and gloom of free trade agreements and why they may be bad for Australia. But the fact is that, overall, a good free trade agreement is about providing a win-win partnership between both countries. This free trade agreement, and in particular the memorandum of understanding with UWS, will provide so many opportunities and new investments and new industries.

Lindsay sits wedged between two of the fastest growing regions in our country, the north-west growth sector and the south-west growth sector, and I would like to acknowledge the
presence today of my other Western Sydney colleagues that represent this very diverse and innovative region. I would also like to congratulate the amazing work of the Prime Minister, the foreign affairs minister and the trade minister for enabling this wonderful opportunity to come before the people of Western Sydney. One of the most impressive aspects of this free trade agreement is that it will open up the people of Western Sydney to exposure to a $170 billion industry. The work this government has done in opening the doors for the people in my electorate of Lindsay to involvement as a global industry partner will be absolutely crucial to its success.

I would like to congratulate the University of Western Sydney for seeing this opportunity to establish the new facility in Western Sydney, which the university will make happen, to specifically study and evaluate and validate traditional Chinese medicines. The landmark deal will see the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine link with the University of Western Sydney's National Institute of Complementary Medicine to evaluate different herbal medicines. The plan will use western research to give many of the medicines the credibility they need to be accepted as a genuine alternative or complementary therapy. But there is more than just this.

It is an agreement that will see Chinese remedies translated into an integrated healthcare setting, and that has an enormous spin-off. There are massive patenting opportunities, while there will be more options for patents, and doctors, too, will benefit by potentially offering alternatives to medicines that are overprescribed like we are currently seeing with some antibiotics. I am a person that suffers with this. I am allergic to penicillin and other sulphur drugs. I can only take antibiotics, which means I need to be careful when I do take them in case I have a chronic illness and I need antibiotics in the future.

This deal opens the door to a whole new world in the way we look at prescribed medicines. The new faculty will aim to develop new treatments for unmet medical needs and new medicines for export all around the world. It will also see synthetic re-creations of active ingredients in those medicines, taking pressure off local flora and perhaps, down the track, the fauna populations. As it stands, the new centre will initially be studying the effectiveness of Chinese herbs. In its embryonic stage the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine will give UWS $20 million to build a research and patent facility that will directly employed 60 people, and that does not include workers employed on the site's construction or the cost to get the facility up and running.

But while that is all great news for Western Sydney there is even more exciting news that this MOU has brought to the region. For instance, the Baiada group are looking at a 256-hectare site in the south of my electorate where they want to employ in the vicinity of 25,000 people at a new science park. They have gone to Nashville, they have gone overseas, they are looking at how they can actually bring a new silicon valley to our part of Western Sydney. We are not talking one or two jobs here. We are talking jobs in the thousands. We are talking about Western Sydney being the innovative health leader for well into the future.

This is exciting for an area where it is estimated that anywhere between 180,000 to 220,000 people have a job deficit. In my electorate alone two-thirds of the workforce have to commute every single day. That is about 65,000 people. When we talk about building in the vicinity of 25,000 smart jobs, this is significant. The government's infrastructure plan through the Werrington arterial will link to the Werrington Business Park as well as the Dunheved
Business Park. The Penrith Business Alliance estimate that each of these parks will be worth 6,000 jobs. That is more smart jobs for the people of Western Sydney. This is what innovative, smart free trade agreements are going to mean to the people of Western Sydney.

It was my great pleasure to have the Minister for Foreign Affairs in my electorate on Thursday. She has been crucial in the drafting of this policy. And how proud was I to sit there? I could see the policy that she put together in an embryonic stage whilst we were in opposition, now with corporate partners coming online to invest in what will be an amazing future for our part of Western Sydney; a region that for so long has been overlooked—a region that people really have not given the due respect that it has deserved.

I have received a letter from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney. He said, 'I am sure you agree it is notable that the partnership in question was the sole ChAFTA subagreement witnessed by President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Abbott. This illustrates the centrality of views of both the leaders of complementary medicine to the ChAFTA's overarching aim, which is, at its core, to produce substantially beneficial and progressive socioeconomic outcomes for both countries. This particular subagreement certainly promises to do just that.

I am pleased to add that Western Sydney, Australia's third-largest and fastest-growing economy, will be a significant beneficiary of this objective. The subagreement effectively positions the University of Western Sydney's National Institute of Complementary Medicine as a pivotal contributor to the global growth in accredited traditional Chinese medicine. The partnership with the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine will significantly strengthen the evidence based efficacy and take up of traditional Chinese medicines internationally through substantially increased research and development capacity.

Australian industry revenue from complementary medicines, of which traditional Chinese medicine is a significant component, is conservatively estimated at $3.5 billion per annum. Prior to the execution of the subagreement, revenue was expected to grow to $4.6 billion by 2017-18, with accompanying employment figures exceeding 40,000. Pleasingly, these are already-strong projections and, of course, will need to be revised in the positive.

The global growth of traditional Chinese medicine is very strong, reflecting the heightened levels of domestic support in China. A 2013 KPMG assessment of the Chinese pharmaceutical industry highlighted a 165 per cent increase in government investment in this industry segment since 2005. In 2011 the PRC government identified research and development as a priority, which includes the establishment of a clinical research and development system. The subagreement enables Australia—and more pointedly, Western Sydney—to be the beneficiary of this process.

Already the subagreement has led to the securing in principle of a bilateral commitment to establish an Australia-China academy for innovative health care in Western Sydney. This facility will support internationally recognised preclinical and clinical research by visiting local specialists within a world-class teaching and research setting. In addition, it is clear that through investment attraction and employment growth potential, the subagreement offers further confirmation of Western Sydney's capacity to transition from a declining manufacturing sector to move towards an innovation based industry. Like you, the university believes that this shift is not only entirely achievable but imperative for securing the region's international competitiveness and prosperity for coming decades.'
I am very pleased to bring this motion before the House. I am very pleased to advocate for the people of Western Sydney and I am excited as to what the future of our region can bring.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (10:18): I second the motion and I rise to support the member for Lindsay's motion on the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement, particularly in relation to the growth of complementary medicines in Australia.

The complementary medicine industry is growing rapidly in Australia. A recent report by Complementary Medicines Australia indicates that the complementary medicine industry in Australia generates more than $3.5 billion in revenue per year and that this is expected to grow to $4.6 billion by 2018, supporting over 40,000 jobs. Australian companies export around $200 million worth of complementary medicines to more than 20 countries in south-east Asia, Europe and the Americas.

Exports continue to grow at a higher rate than domestic consumption. Domestically, two out of three Australians use complementary medicines as part of their integrated health care each year. Through this, the government collects in excess of $200 million per annum in GST on the sale of complementary medicines and services. There are also a number of benefits for everyday Australians. For instance, more than 40 per cent of users take complementary medicines for chronic medical conditions where current treatments may be expensive, ineffective or have unwanted side effects.

I am very proud to say that the National Institute of Complementary Medicine is based at the University of Western Sydney in my electorate of Macarthur in Sydney's south-west. The institute was established in 2007 by Prime Minister Tony Abbott when he was Minister for Health and Ageing under John Howard. Since then, the institute's reputation as a world-class leader in this industry has well and truly flourished. It provides leadership and support for strategically directed research into complementary medicine and the translation of evidence into clinical practice and relevant policy.

The institute's advanced research and policy work in this field is intended to lead to better health outcomes for Australians, to increased manufacturing and farming opportunities in this country and to capture international export prospects, as well as to deliver new knowledge based jobs for Australians. The institute currently employs more than 50 staff and research students performing world-class clinical trials, preclinical studies and research, and has a remarkable international reputation in the field of traditional Chinese medicine.

The National Institute of Complementary Medicine is funded by the university, industry partners, philanthropy and research grants and contracts. It is working to gain approval from the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration for the first prescription drug in Chinese herbal medicine, and is currently leading a phase-3 clinical trial in the treatment of vascular dementia.

Australia's world-class reputation in Chinese medicine is recognised and respected by the People's Republic of China, due in part to the collaborative work the institute has conducted with its partners in China. Over the years, the institute has established close working relationships with many of China's leading pharmaceutical and herbal medicine companies, hospitals and universities. These relationships have opened up a range of investment and innovation opportunities for Australia, which are likely to get stronger into the future. As a
leading global research entity and regulator of Chinese medicine, the National Institute of Complementary Medicine is key to unlocking the market potential in China. In addition to its scientific research, the institute's significant role in policy research has led to Australia being the first nation to regulate the practice of Chinese medicine.

As I have mentioned, the institute has created significant domestic investment and innovation opportunities, and plays an important role in broadening opportunities for tertiary study in this growth industry. At UWS's Campbelltown campus, students can undertake bachelor and master courses in complementary medicine. The institute equips graduates to become nationally registered practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine and work within the healthcare system as independent primary care practitioners. UWS also offers postgraduate training to current traditional Chinese medicine practitioners to assist them to grow as specialists in their clinical practice. The Master of Health Science (Traditional Chinese Medicine) course, for instance, is the only degree of its kind in Australia and is sought out by a wide variety of practitioners.

The complementary medicine industry offers significant economic and health opportunities for this country. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and commend the National Institute of Complementary Medicine for their hard work in supporting these opportunities. I note that there are other members from Western Sydney—the member for Chifley and the member for Parramatta—who are going to speak around the free trade agreement in a private member's bill, and I wish them all the very best.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (10:23): It gives me pleasure to speak on this because, like the member for Lindsay, I had the honour and privilege of being able to graduate from the University of Western Sydney. As Western Sydney residents, we wanted to see, particularly amongst our generation and future generations, the ability for people to attend tertiary education within a region that we call home and that we believe holds great economic promise for the rest of the nation.

I graduated in the early nineties when the university had just started to take form. It had been in the pipeline for quite some time. In 1987, in the lead-up to the university being formally established, it was supposed to be named Chifley University—a name I certainly would not have had any issue with given the privilege I have in representing the electors of Chifley in this place. However, controversially, in 1989 the then state coalition government did not agree and decreed that it would become the University of Western Sydney. The fights over the name have well and truly gone and I think we all support the university in its continued operation and the fact that it is a platform for great opportunity, as I said earlier and as I reflected on a few moments ago, for the young people of our region.

You can see this through the growth of the university. I attended the Werrington campus—first the Kingswood campus and then the Werrington campus. You could see the growth through Bankstown, Campbelltown, obviously in Parramatta and at the site that it had in Westmead, which was the initial launching platform into Parramatta itself, and in Hawkesbury. Bringing together different colleges of advanced education, as they were once known, and bringing them under the umbrella of a university was a major deal. As I said, it is something that we can be rightly proud of.

I have spoken very positively in times past of the university and I will continue to do so. It does not necessarily mean that I look at the university through rose coloured glasses. There
have been concerns on decisions that have been made by the university from time to time. There was a great deal of concern a few years ago when the university was looking to shut down its course of economics. We might be talking about a free trade agreement today, but not offering an economics course seemed to be rather odd given the fact that the economy of Western Sydney is one of the largest in the country and we need to ensure that we train up our own army or barrage of economists coming from the region that have an affinity with the region. Certainly, at that point in time, the argument was made by the university that the demand was not there for the economics course to be maintained and hence it was not continued—or the argument was that it would not be continued, although economics and business courses are, thankfully, offered by the university.

It does beg the question of how to assign resources for certain things, like the things that we are talking about today, in a climate where financial pressure is well and truly on. That financial pressure is no doubt being exercised, in my mind and in the minds of many of ours on this side of the House, on the proposed changes to higher education funding reform. There is $1.9 billion in cuts to universities that are being proposed in the current bill, mark 2. There will still be $100,000 degrees for undergraduate students. There are about $171 million in cuts to equity programs; $200 million cuts in indexation of grant programs; critically, $170 million in cuts to research training; and $80 million in cuts to the Australian Research Council.

The reason I mention those last two points, in particular, is to pick up on a point that the member for Lindsay made about innovation. It would be great for our university to be able to partner effectively with business in our region and ensure that we have a transfer of knowledge, a sharing of assets—particularly by start-ups, by innovative firms and by the university. We need to find the money to do that. But if they are under the financial pressure that is potentially going to be imposed on them by the bill that is being debated in the House and in other places then that is going to be a cause for concern, and people will rightly ask why we are championing, on one hand, what is being put forward in the substance of this resolution when we are not able to see other things occur.

I continue to hear rumours, for instance, about the future of the Hawkesbury campus, and that is of great concern to me. Those rumours may be unfounded, but people are sufficiently concerned to raise those with me. I have also heard rumours that the heart of UWS will be moved from Werrington to Parramatta. I understand that the Parramatta campus has grown phenomenally and one of its champions is here in the House, the member for Parramatta herself. While Parramatta is an astoundingly great campus, there is something important about maintaining the heritage of Werrington, being in the heart of Western Sydney in the way that it is. I am concerned about that heart being taken out of Werrington, out of the electorate of the member for Lindsay, and moved out of there. There are also questions—I mentioned Hawkesbury. As much as there is celebration about the expansion plans that have been announced for Parramatta, there is undeniable evidence that Western Sydney will continue to grow westward. There are about half a million people expected in the north-west and the south-west. We need to be making sure that we dedicate as much investment as necessary for the people that are moving in there.

I make this argument not from a parochial basis. I am not arguing this as the member for Chifley; I am arguing this as a member who believes in the growth of Western Sydney and that we should have the infrastructure there for people across the region. Naturally, I am very
proud of the fact that UWS has a presence at Nirimba, which is in the Chifley electorate, but it will also have those growing pains and those growing pressures continue. As I said, I am very happy if the university is branching out, particularly in terms of using the auspices of a free trade agreement to work with our friends in China, but at the same time we want to make sure that they can also deliver for the region. The continuing need to deliver for the region as it continues its fast pace of growth is something that has to be front and centre.

I have not yet had the opportunity to meet formally with the new Vice-Chancellor, Barney Glover. I do look forward to doing so at some point. His people seek to assure me that they are balancing out their growth plans in a way that will deliver for the region. I look forward to hearing the actual detail to back up the claim. But I do want to ensure, as I have regularly argued both here and elsewhere, that as Western Sydney continues to move its expansion westward people in those areas do not suffer a lag in service or infrastructure. At the same time as meeting those new needs I want to ensure, as I am sure—and this is regardless of your politics—we all want to make sure, that existing service in the electorates, for example, of Parramatta, of Chifley, of Greenway, of Lindsay, of Macarthur continue to be sustained, and sustained thoroughly.

But there are, as I have indicated before, concerns about what is happening on that front. We are certainly happy about, and the member for Parramatta has rightly advised of, the strong links that the university has had with the pharmaceutical industry and the collaboration that has occurred there. We would want to see that broadened, and I understand that the member for Parramatta will expand on this issue further. I think we are unified on our side of the House about the future of universities like the University of Western Sydney. I also look forward to hearing the vice-chancellor's comments on what the impact of the higher education bill would be on the University of Western Sydney if those cuts are to eventuate. Western Sydney would be rightly, justifiably concerned about the impact on the quality of education in our region if the higher education changes being put forward by this government take effect as they are celebrating, in part, an international expansion while there is so much pressure on the domestic front to deliver service.

So I think there are questions to be asked of the coalition members from Western Sydney about what assurances are being given for the University of Western Sydney's continued operation of delivering high-quality education to the people of our region into the future. I think there are also questions to be asked obviously and respectfully of the university management about how they will manage growth into the years to come. While we certainly recognise, respect and celebrate international expansion, we want to ensure that the core function of this university, delivering education for Western Sydney students, is maintained. While we may have differences about aspects of policy, and certainly some of the things I have said will be contested by those opposite, I think we are unified in wanting to see Western Sydney students getting a quality level of university education that is enjoyed by others in the country.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (10:33): I am really pleased to be able to stand in this House today and congratulate the University of Western Sydney for an extraordinary job of building a relationship with the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, a task that they commenced well over a decade ago and which culminated very recently in a memorandum of understanding which will move an already existing relationship in a new and fabulous
direction. It shows a genuine commitment by both universities to building a future in clinical research. I am a little more concerned that the government speakers today, in moving this motion, take a little more credit than perhaps is due to the government by linking this agreement to the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. It is not actually part of the free trade agreement, and none of the press releases by the University of Western Sydney or, for that matter, by the Australian Trade Commission, when this memorandum of understanding was signed, mention the free trade agreement at all.

This is a longstanding agreement. In fact, there is already a high-level agreement between the University of Western Sydney and the Beijing University for Chinese Medicine that dates back some time. We also know that internationally the National Institute for Complementary Medicine at the University of Western Sydney has been formally recognised by the Chinese government, and those high-level collaborative agreements have already been in place between both China and Korea. This is an activity that is incredibly important in Western Sydney not just in terms of health but also in terms of the economy. Complementary medicine in Australia alone is a massive market. Two-thirds of Australians use complementary medicines and therapies each year, representing an annual expenditure of over $3.5 billion in Australia alone.

The National Institute for Complementary Medicine was established by the University of Western Sydney back in June 2007. One of the previous speakers mentioned that it was funded by the Howard government, and we should always give credit where credit is due. That was a very forward thinking decision back in 2007. The institute has continued to grow between then and 2013, when the former Centre for Complementary Medicine Research came under that same government framework. They have been doing really quite remarkable work. They have already successfully completed clinical trials on a broad range of things such as irritable bowel syndrome, infertility, menopause, dementia, cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, fatigue, cold sores, delayed onset muscle soreness and a whole range of others. This has been a focus at the highest level of skill and research in this university for over a decade. The National Institute for Complementary Medicine at Western Sydney is one of only two Australian universities that is licensed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration to test the quality of these medicines and it has been doing a remarkable job.

The relationship now with the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine is an incredibly important one. It will lead to a new research led Chinese medicine clinic in Sydney based in Westmead in my electorate with the potential for Australia to tap into the $170 billion global traditional Chinese medicine market, an incredibly lucrative market and an area of research that is growing in the world. It was good to see the University of Western Sydney investing in it at such an early stage some 10 years ago. The Beijing University of Chinese Medicine already has relationships with universities elsewhere in France and in Canada and a strong relationship already with the University of Western Sydney, but this is a major step forward.

Again I stress that, while we are today talking about the University of Western Sydney, it is disappointing that the government speakers tried to take a little bit more credit than was due in this particular memorandum of understanding. It was in fact signed in front of the two Prime Ministers, as the Australian Trade Commission press release says, but it is the result of a decade of work and support from the previous Howard government and a relationship that already exists and is well established.
I congratulate the University of Western Sydney. I am very proud of it. Well done.
Debate adjourned.

**Syrian Refugees**

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (10:38): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the Syrian conflict which began in March 2011 has:

(i) developed into one of the worst humanitarian disasters of our time; and

(ii) caused widespread damage to infrastructure across Syria, with basic necessities such as food, water and medical care difficult or impossible to access;

(b) serious human rights violations remain a common occurrence in Syria;

(c) it is estimated that more than 190,000 people have lost their lives in the Syrian conflict so far;

(d) in the three and a half years since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, more than 3.5 million refugees have fled their homes and crossed into neighbouring countries, while the United Nations estimates a further 6.5 million are displaced within Syria itself, representing an increase of 2 million in just six months;

(e) hosting the Syrian refugees has put enormous pressure on the infrastructure, services, utilities and local populations of the host countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, with Syrian refugees in Lebanon now constituting approximately one-third of the population, and unemployment among poor Lebanese rising significantly;

(f) the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has encouraged the international community to share the burden of supporting Syrian refugees, having a target for resettlement of 130,000 by the end of 2016, but has received a minimal response to date with less than 2 per cent of the registered refugee population having secured a resettlement place;

(g) while the regional response to the crisis should be commended, the global response has been relatively weak;

(h) the United Nations issued its largest appeal in relation to a single crisis in December 2013, stating that $6.5 billion was vital to adequately support Syrians inside and outside of the conflict-ravaged nation, but to date the appeal has only raised 62 per cent of that target; and

(i) in December 2014 the United Nations World Food Programme announced that it was suspending its food aid program for Syrian refugees for lack of funding, leaving 1.7 million refugees to go hungry during winter, and has called for US$64 million in immediate assistance to allow the recommencement of this essential aid;

(2) calls on the Australian Government to:

(a) reconsider the level of Australia's existing humanitarian support and funding to assist those affected by the Syrian crisis with a view to making a significantly larger contribution;

(b) offer direct support to neighbouring countries, including through funding and arrangements to receive additional refugees in Australia by expanding the existing quota of asylum seekers and focusing resettlement on those Syrian refugees recommended by the UNHCR on the basis of vulnerability; and

(c) take an active role in all relevant multilateral fora in calling for a more substantial and better coordinated global response, including a 'fair share' approach to the resettlement of refugees.

It was just over a year ago that I participated in a UNICEF parliamentary delegation, together with the shadow minister for foreign affairs, Tanya Plibersek, and Senator Sarah Hanson-
Young, to observe the plight of the Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon and the challenges faced by the host countries.

We saw firsthand the horror still on the faces of the refugees at what they had experienced, the fear for others left behind, the loss of their homes and everything they owned, the loss of pride and dignity that comes with poverty and dependence on assistance, and the anxiety about their future, especially for the children. We also saw the enormous pressures placed on local Jordanian and Lebanese communities by hosting so many refugees—pressures on the economy, on health and education services and utilities, on housing and employment and on the social and political fabric of their societies. Despite their concerns about the sustainability of the situation, these countries continue to accept refugees in true humanitarian spirit.

Since March 2011, the humanitarian crisis in Syria, horrific from the outset, has consistently deteriorated and there is no end in sight. More than 200,000 people have been killed, including 10,000 children. The life expectancy of Syrians has dropped by 13 years since the crisis began and the Syrian economy has shrunk by as much as 40 per cent. The humanitarian situation is being exacerbated by the destruction of infrastructure and the lack of access to basic necessities. Hospitals have been destroyed by airstrikes and schools have been levelled or else militarised by combatants. Civilians are sometimes bombed while they wait in line for bread, and attacks have sought the deliberate interruption of water and food supplies. Malnutrition, starvation, and death have followed.

The Syrian conflict is characterised by the widespread violation of international human rights. Enforced disappearances, unlawful detention and the torture and murder of men, women, children and the elderly are common occurrences. Children are being recruited into combat and support roles by groups like the Free Syrian Army. Sexual violence is widespread. For all that the world is focused on the brutal actions of IS, so dramatically documented and publicised on the internet, the fact remains that the Syrian regime of Al Assad has been far more deadly for civilians in Syria than IS. The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented at least 1,232 civilian deaths in December 2014, with 1,049 killed by regime forces, or more than 85 per cent. IS is responsible, by this count, for just over five percent of the civilian deaths. Of course, due to the limited media access to Syria, it is difficult to verify casualty numbers, but the available figures are based on reports by grassroots organisations and independent human rights advocates, field hospital workers and journalists.

As UN Security Council Resolution 2191 noted:

… 7.6 million [Syrians] are internally displaced, 4.5 million are living in hard-to-reach areas and 212,000 are trapped in besieged areas.

Neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, as well as Iraq and Egypt, now host over 3.5 million refugees. Lebanon, a country of 4½ million people, is hosting more than a million refugees spread over 1,700 locations. These desperate people are forced to exist in circumstances that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has described as 'double jeopardy'; displaced by conflict, they now exist in dangerous poverty.

In Geneva last December, the international community agreed to take in 100,000 Syrian refugees, contributing to the UNHCR's overall goal of resettling '10 per cent of the Syrian refugee population'. The World Food Programme has been able to resume its work in Syria after stopping in December for want of funding. While these are positive developments, the
international response has not been strong enough. By December only 62 per cent of the $6.5 billion originally requested by UNHCR had been received and UNHCR currently estimates that $8.4 billion will ultimately be required. Australia needs to be part of this effort at a level commensurate with both our capacity and our national character. So far we have contributed $130 million in aid, and I was glad when the government announced in August last year that it would reserve 2,200 refugee places for Syrian refugees and 2,200 places for affected Iraqis. But when one considers the contribution being made by other countries, especially the neighbouring countries hosting millions of refugees, it is plain that Australia could do more.

At a time when serious national and global incidents occur weekly, it is crucial that we guard against a tendency to think that what is happening in Syria is just one of a number of big issues—when of course it is the largest humanitarian disaster that has occurred in decades by some considerable margin. We must guard against a sense that what happened last week or last year is old news, because the Syrian crisis continues today as terribly and harmfully as ever. In this case the right course of action is simple: Australia should provide more humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the conflict in Syria and to neighbouring host countries and we should receive more Syrian refugees.

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (10:43): I am pleased to speak on the motion on the Syrian conflict, and I thank the member for Fremantle for putting it on the Notice Paper today. The Australian government is gravely concerned by the ongoing conflict in Syria. There is no disagreement that the Syrian conflict has created one of the worst humanitarian crises currently facing the world. But, in determining how to response to such a crisis as this, it is important that we deal with the facts, that we do not act in ignorance and that we determine how to act based on the best available information.

Tragically, as a result of this conflict, more than 200,000 people have already died, 3.8 million have fled to neighbouring countries and 7.6 million are internally displaced. The conflict threatens the security of neighbouring countries, including Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

While the Indo-Pacific region is the focus of Australia's aid program, Australia has responded generously to the humanitarian crises across the Middle East. Australia provided almost $70 million in response to the humanitarian crises across the Middle East in 2014. Australia has contributed $135.8 million in humanitarian assistance in response to the Syrian crisis since the conflict began, and this includes $35 million in 2014. This makes Australia the 14th largest donor to the UN's Syria appeals since 2011. Australia provides food, water, shelter, protection, medical assistance and education inside Syria. Australia is also supporting the refugees in neighbouring countries, particularly in Lebanon and in Jordan, while helping refugees and their host communities.

Australian funding is provided through UN agencies and NGOs. Australia contributed almost $2 million to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to support the OPCW-UN Joint Mission overseeing the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons program. The government has announced that 2,200 Syrian refugees will be resettled in Australia in 2014-15. In addition to the 2,200 Iraqi refugees over the next three years, Australia will also...
settle at least 4,500 Syrians. This is in addition to the more than 1,000 Syrians who were resettled in the previous financial year, 2013-14.

In addition to our financial contribution and refugee intake, Australia has played a leading role in international efforts to improve humanitarian access into Syria. During our term on the UN Security Council, Australia worked with Jordan and Luxembourg to co-author three UNSC resolutions seeking to improve humanitarian access to Syria. They were resolutions 2139, 2165 and 2191. These were enormously significant, particularly in terms of our success in mobilising the support of the international community.

These resolutions demand that all parties to the conflict take essential steps to protect Syrian civilians and to allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access through Syria, across borders and conflict lines, to those in need. Resolution 2165 authorised UN agencies and their implementing partners to provide assistance through specified border crossings through neighbouring countries. More than half a million desperate people inside Syria have received aid through these border crossings.

Nevertheless, the parties to the conflict, particularly the Assad regime and Daesh, known as ISIL, continue to inflict appalling violence against civilians and have been guilty of widespread abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. The Syrian conflict urgently needs a political solution that can bring an end to the violence.

Australia strongly supports the efforts of the United Nations Security General, and his Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, to encourage a political process. The solution must be one in which all serious communities have a voice in the country's future and that has no room, whatsoever, for extremist groups like Daesh or those who are affiliated with al-Qaeda.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (10:48): I also thank the member for Fremantle for bringing this important motion before the parliament for debate today. She is right. Four years ago the Syrian conflict started and it has developed into the worst humanitarian crisis in recent history. Just to reiterate the horrifying facts about the Syrian crisis: over 200,000 people, in the last four years, have lost their lives; and almost four million people have fled to neighbouring countries. The fact is that in Syria, with a population of over 12 million, more than half of the population is displaced—four million internationally or into neighbouring countries, and the remaining two million displaced internally.

Think about the enormous damage that is now being done to the infrastructure, the way of life and the future of those people. Late last year, the Chief Government Whip, who will speak next, and I had the opportunity to conduct a field visit where we visited Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon to assess the impact of the Syrian crisis. We spoke to many of the refugees. We spent time in various camps. We spent time with the UN. We spent time with the educators. We spent time with those catering to the humanitarian needs of the Syrian refugees.

You could not possibly come away from a visit like that unaffected and simply come back to Australia and take the view that it is somebody else's problem. It cannot be somebody else's problem when this had its origins in the coalition of the willing back in 2003 and, unfortunately, disturbed relationships within Iraq. As a consequence of that, a domino effect has occurred throughout the Middle East and we have not got to the stage where we can say that there is a political solution in sight. What we have been doing, as part of the world
community, is fighting to ensure that the humanitarian needs of countries such as Iraq and Syria are being protected, but the truth on the ground is that we are losing that battle.

I think about the amount of devastation that we saw—parents of children, some of the kids coming across the border with deformities and needing access to doctors. Philip and I got to see the lucky kids, the ones going to school—the kids were the ones that attended schools in tents. The vast majority of the kids did not go to school; they will not go to school. The vast majority of the kids coming out of this conflict will be cannon fodder for tomorrow's jihadis unless we take a stand on this.

We cannot sit back and say this is somebody else's problem, because, as I said, we were one of those countries that, despite the urging of the international community, the urging of the United Nations and the urging of the European nations, decided to participate and be a part of the coalition of the willing in 2003. That is history and that is a fact. But, as a consequence, we have skin in the game. We have a higher level of responsibility than other countries who were not part of the coalition of the willing. We need to step up and honour our responsibilities to that part of the region.

On that issue, Oxfam have indicated that our fair share of the financial contribution to Syria at the moment would be $117.6 million. We are nowhere near that. As a matter of fact, in the last budget we cut back our financial contribution to international aid. As for our refugee intake, whilst it is true that the number of places dedicated to refugees out of Syria and Iraq is now 4,400, that is on the existing humanitarian intake of 13,750. When Labor were in government, we increased that intake to 20,000. We think there is an overwhelming need for this government to understand its responsibilities and step up, to increase the level of refugee intake and to also honour our commitment to financially assist the humanitarian effort in the Middle East.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Chief Government Whip) (10:54): I thank the member for Fremantle and my colleague the member for Werriwa for proposing and seconding this motion respectively. We can debate elements of it. I think, in part, it probably understates the enormity and magnitude of the problem, but I will take up part (2) of the motion, which I think fails to acknowledge adequately what the government is seeking to do.

I will just spend a moment on Syria. I have visited Syria many times. It is the cradle of Arab civilisation, enormously historic and culturally very significant. When you go to cities like Aleppo and Homs, when you see some of the areas which even the Crusaders tramped through, like the Krak des Chevaliers, you cannot help but be influenced by it being the cradle of Arab civilisation which has brought together Sunni, Shia, Alawi, Druze and Christians—people do not realise the patriarchs of so many Christian churches have their headquarters in Damascus. This is a country that ought to be an example to the rest of the world, demonstrating that people of different faiths, different religions, can come together and live together in the way in which we do in Australia.

It is an absolute tragedy that we are seeing so many people displaced by this conflict. I think the numbers of those who are externally displaced are higher than recorded in this motion. We saw and heard about the situation in Turkey; in Jordan, which I have been to previously; and in Lebanon. These countries are now facing extraordinary pressures. Lebanon and Jordan are at the point of closing their borders. Turkey is becoming less willing to accept those who are displaced. There needs to be a realisation around the world about the crisis that
has occurred in this region. I am enormously troubled by the potential for insecurity in Lebanon, a country which I have visited so many times and where many friends of mine still have relatives. I lament what is happening in Jordan and Turkey. I think it is important that we acknowledge the enormity of the problem and that we work to resolve it.

To pick up on one comment by my colleague the member for Werriwa, the Labor Party certainly did argue for a larger aid program, but I might say they did so in the context of a large number of unlawful arrivals being accommodated in the refugee program because they had landed here in Australia and they were counted as part of the program. So the 20,000 figure was largely fictitious in terms of what it was likely to be—in comparison to where we are now, where the temporary protection visa regime will mean that they are not taking permanent places.

We do have a significant commitment to assisting in the resettlement of people have been displaced in Syria. We are continuing to play a meaningful role in funding UN agencies and NGOs, in recognition of the considerable demand that there is for resources to be able to deal with their needs. As mentioned by the member for Werriwa, we had the opportunity of seeing refugees in circumstances that are quite horrific. It is important to understand that they are not free to travel; they do not have money to pay people smugglers. They have priority, in my view, in our consideration when we are looking at who ought to be assisted.

I am sure Australia will continue to play a positive role in contributing financially, providing refugee places and working through the international organisations to try and get a resolution to what is, I believe, the most significant problem facing the world community right now.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (10:59): I am pleased to support this motion and I congratulate and thank the member for Fremantle on highlighting, in the Australian parliament, this very important issue. The situation in Syria is nothing short of a humanitarian disaster. The conflict which began in March 2011 has devastated the country and inflicted considerable pressure on the surrounding region.

In four years, this bloody conflict has resulted in the deaths of 190,000 people, many of them in shockingly brutal circumstances, and the displacement of another 6.5 million refugees internally and 3½ million people externally. The situation at the moment is dire. In September 2014, United Nations human rights investigators released evidence of atrocities which continue to be committed in Syria by both Islamic extremists and—

The SPEAKER: In accordance with the resolution agreed to earlier today, the debate is interrupted. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for a later hour this day.

MOTIONS

Sydney: Martin Place Siege

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (11:00): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognise the tragic events around the siege of the Lindt Cafe in Martin Place, Sydney on 15 and 16 December, 2014;
(2) extend its deepest and heartfelt sympathies to the family and friends of Katrina Dawson and Tori Johnson for their loss;
(3) honour the courage and fortitude shown by those held in the Lindt Cafe;
(4) acknowledge the response of the law enforcement and security agencies and emergency services personnel to a difficult and dangerous situation;
(5) recognise the calm and steadfast response of the people of Sydney, as well as the wholehearted support of the Australian people for the people held inside the Lindt Cafe and their families both during and after the siege;
(6) thank the leaders and people of other nations who stood with Australia during this testing time;
(7) note with sadness that other countries have recently suffered at the hands of terrorists, including France, Canada, Iraq, Egypt; Nigeria, Japan and Jordan;
(8) declare our deep repugnance of terrorism in all forms; and
(9) affirm the unity and resolve of this Parliament to protect our citizens and our democratic freedoms.

The 15th of December last year was a testing day for our country. It was a testing day for the police and for the security and emergency services. It was a testing day for the people of Sydney, witnessing an atrocity unfold in a cafe known to many Sydneysiders, in the utterly familiar surrounds of Martin Place. Above all, it was a testing day for the men and women held in the Lindt Cafe and for their families. So today we welcome to the chamber the men and women held in the Lindt Cafe as well as the families of Tori Johnson and Katrina Dawson. The thoughts and prayers of 24 million Australians and many millions more around the world were with you on that terrible day, and I want to assure you we are still with you. We are still with you as you come to terms with that horrific experience. Every day must be a struggle for the Johnson and the Dawson families. We grieve with you and we hope that you draw strength and comfort from the support of the people of our country. We are so glad that you are here in the home of our democracy, in the very cradle of that noble idea that men and women can make their own choices for their own lives, provided that does not hurt anyone else.

Australia is a peaceful country. We are a beacon of hope and liberty throughout the world, and Sydney, our largest city, is so cosmopolitan and diverse that anyone can be at home there. In this country, our differences demonstrate our freedom, and our willingness to lend a hand and to get along makes this the best place on earth to live. And this is what was threatened on 15 and 16 December last year. And this is what we are determined to uphold and defend, at home and abroad, every single day. The best response to evil is good. The best response to terrorism is to live normal lives, because that shows that we might be threatened but we will not be changed.

The Martin Place siege, I regret to say, was inspired by that death cult now rampant in much of Syria and Iraq, which is a travesty of religion and governance and which should never be dignified with the term 'Islamic State'. The Martin Place siege was the act of terror that we hoped would never occur in this country. I want to assure the men and women in the gallery, I want to assure all Australians, that this government, as well as our state counterparts, are determined to learn from what happened at the Lindt Cafe on that dreadful day. We are considering the Commonwealth-state review, which will be released, with our response, before the end of the month, and there is also a New South Wales coronial inquiry that is underway.
But the first duty of government is to keep our citizens safe and, while no-one can promise that a brutal act of terror will never occur again, these inquiries will identify what we can do to further protect our people and our country. I pledge that I will do whatever I humanly can to keep our people safe. That is why this government has boosted spending on our security and intelligence services. That is why members of the Australian Defence Force even now are currently working with the forces of other nations to disrupt and degrade the ISIL or Daesh death cult. Air strikes, including our own, have hit it hard, stopping its momentum and degrading its forces. This death cult has declared war on the world, and the world is both hitting back and reaching out.

In the days after the atrocity against Charlie Hebdo, the people of France responded to the brutality of Islamist extremists by walking arm in arm through the streets of Paris. Likewise, in the days after the Sydney siege, Australians responded by carpeting Martin Place with flowers. Tens of thousands brought tributes, including a bride who had interrupted her wedding day to do so. Manal Kassem's floral tribute was a reminder that Muslim Australians were as affronted by the events of 15 and 16 December as every Australian. She reminded us, as did all who responded during those difficult days, that for every person who seeks to impose extremism and violence there are countless more who will stand against them. Australia did not stand alone.

I want to place on record my thanks to the many national leaders who called in response to the terrorism in Martin Place. I want to assure the House that we will defend ourselves against those who seek to do us harm, but we will always do so in keeping with our Australian values. Those values are embodied in this institution and in our shared adherence to liberal thought and to democratic pluralism. We stand for the right of individuals to choose their own paths and to live their lives free of fear. We stand against organisations or individuals that promote hatred here or recruit vulnerable Australians for terrorism abroad. We have already made it an offence to advocate terrorism and made it easier to ban terrorist organisations. If we have to seek further legislation, we will.

This is the first sitting day of the parliament for 2015. This year, like every other year, there will be moments of contention, partisanship, bitterness and drama, but there will also be moments of profound unity where our shared love of country prevails over everything else. This is such a moment.

In April, some in this chamber will travel to Gallipoli to pay tribute to the courage, resourcefulness, determination and sacrifice of our forebears a century ago. But today we need not look so far or travel so far to see resilience, courage and decency. We look to the gallery and we see modern Australia. We see young and old, men and women of diverse backgrounds. In them, we see the courage and the resourcefulness and the decency that we saw in other generations and in other contexts.

Greater love hath no man or woman than to lay down their life for their friend. We salute Tori Johnson and Katrina Dawson. We salute everyone touched by the siege, touched by this atrocity. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr Shorten (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (11:11): At a quarter to 10 on Monday morning, 15 December, 17 people, some old friends and some total strangers, were thrust into an unimaginable nightmare of one man's making. For 16½ hours, the world...
watched. It waited and it prayed, hoping for a safe and peaceful end to this act of madness. Tragically, this was not to be.

Two fine Australians—Katrina Dawson, a brilliant barrister, loving wife and mother of three; and Tori Johnson, the cafe's manager, a beloved son and soul mate—lost their lives in the final minutes of the siege. To you, the people who loved Katrina and Tori and the people they loved, I offer the heartfelt condolences of our party and our nation. Australia is indeed with you in your grief. The story of Katrina and Tori's brave and terrible times, I believe, makes millions of us wish that we had known them. Now, we never can, except in memory.

Tennyson once wrote of the pain of loss:

… O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

We understand that no words in this place or elsewhere can restore that vanished touch or bring back a voice too soon silenced. All we can offer is Australia's embrace—a promise to honour forever the memory of those lost to you and to all of us.

The same is true for all of you who escaped from this dreadful ordeal with your lives. To you, the survivors, the wounded and the frightened: Australia is here for you. I know all the family members and survivors here today do our parliament great courtesy with your presence. Australia will always be with you, just as we must always be grateful for the bravery, the professionalism and the skill of the New South Wales and federal police, the security forces and emergency services. Like the Prime Minister, I offer them our sincere thanks for their courage and their service.

We still need to learn more about what happened in Martin Place and how we can do our level best to ensure that it does not happen again. We will give the report that the government has received the careful consideration it deserves. We will work with you, the government, because the security of our nation and the safety of our people are above politics. When it comes to fighting terrorism, we are indeed in this together.

What we do know, without question, is that this was a crime deliberately aimed at the innocent. Everyday Australians were the target of terror. It could have been the families of any Australians in there that morning—mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, husbands and wives—savouring the ritual of a Monday morning coffee or just catching up with a friend or a colleague. These people were the victims of a deranged act of violence aimed at dividing our country, and it failed. It failed because Australians will never lose their faith in a peaceful, multicultural democracy. Australians will never surrender to hatred, to fear and to intolerance. We will never reward the perpetrators of evil by abandoning our common humanity.

On that Monday evening, as night descended upon Martin Place, hundreds of thousands of Australians took to social media to do something quite extraordinary. Instead of venting messages of hate or succumbing to fear, under the #illridewithyou, more than 150,000 people made a stand against prejudice. They rallied around the diversity which is at the core of our remarkable, modern Australia; and the next morning, when the siege had ended, Sydneysiders emerged in Martin Place bearing flowers, not hatred. In the very heart of their city, under the eyes of the world, a wonderful field of flowers grew.
In time, that temporary tribute will be replaced with a permanent memorial—a garden nourished by those initial blooms of love—a lasting reminder that even the very worst act of violence is no match for the bravery of our people and the best of our nation. And in that same spirit, let us resolve to honour the memory of those lost to us on that December morning and those who survived by vowing not to change. Let us promise each other always to be a happy and confident people; a nation rejecting fear and embracing diversity; a nation whose first instinct will always be optimism and compassion, never suspicion nor prejudice; and an Australia that is stronger because it stands together, united not defeated—today, tomorrow and always.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Sydney, as the member for the place where this wicked tragedy occurred.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11:17): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the government for the opportunity to speak very briefly on indulgence to this motion.

All of us remember the Sydney Olympics and the way Martin Place played a central role in the welcome we gave to the world. Martin Place was the place where anyone could go to watch the live sites, and we had visitors from every part of our globe. We presented the best of Australia then—a welcome to every nation and a welcome to every race. During the Martin Place siege we saw one of the most difficult times that our nation has faced, and for Katrina Dawson’s family and Tori Johnson’s family, of course, it was the most difficult time that they would ever face.

It is so easy to picture, isn't it? Tori and Katrina and saying goodbye to their families that morning—a quick kiss as they ran out of the door, like any of us would do—going to work, stopping for a coffee and then this terrible tragedy intervening and they were not able to keep that promise, 'See you tonight, kids.' To Katrina's family and to Tori's family: thank you for honouring us today with your presence. We stand with you in your unimaginable loss. To the three hostages and the police officer who were injured during this time: we think of you also—the suffering that you have gone through and the suffering that no doubt stays with you. To all of the hostages who were part of this tragedy: our thoughts are with you, they continue to be with you and we stand united as a parliament in saying that we will do whatever it takes to support you in this difficult time.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (11:19): Madam Speaker, in associating myself with the remarks of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Sydney in respect of the condolence motion.

The SPEAKER: I would also like to associate my feelings with those remarks that have been made.

Debate adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Syrian Refugees

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (11:20): I also wish to associate myself with the remarks of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Sydney in respect of the condolence motion.
As I was saying earlier, at the moment up to five million Syrians are now refugees and over 10 million need humanitarian support. The suffering of people displaced by violence in Syria cannot be ignored by the world community, and that is why it is important that this parliament debate this issue and express a view regarding Australia's commitments to easing the suffering, particularly of those who have been displaced by this terrible ongoing conflict.

A humanitarian response and a longer-term political solution to the crisis must be supported by the international community, including Australia. We are a prosperous and generous nation. We are a wealthy nation, comparatively speaking, in terms of our real incomes, and we must do our best, our utmost, to play a part in this unfolding crisis.

As the motion states, the masses of Syrian refugees have put an enormous pressure on neighbouring countries, particularly Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, with Syrian refugees in Lebanon constituting an astounding one-third of that country's population. There are four million people who live in Lebanon, and an additional one million refugees from Syria have fled over the border and are now in camps on the outskirts of Lebanon. Can you imagine a million people over a series of months coming into Sydney and having to be clothed, fed, sheltered and provided with basic health care? In light of this the government must substantially increase Australia's contribution to the United Nations and relief organisations delivering humanitarian assistance to people affected by violence in Syria. This should include increased support to UN agencies operating in neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. It includes food, schooling and health facilities. Australia can play a role in providing this humanitarian assistance.

In December 2013, the UN issued its largest appeal in relation to a single crisis, stating that $6.5 billion was vital to adequately support Syrians inside and out of the conflict-ravaged nation. To date Australia has offered $35 million. It is not enough. When the Labor government was in office, we dedicated $100 million. That amount of funding has been cut. Based on the size of our economy and Oxfam's calculations, if we were to pay our fair share, if we were to uphold the fair go, our contributions should be in the vicinity of $117 million. The Abbott government must recommit to receiving more refugees from an expanded quota from Syria also.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:24): I am pleased to speak on this motion and I join the comments of the members for Fowler, Fremantle, Kingsford Smith, Berowra and Brisbane.

When we think of Syria and the situation on the ground today, perhaps the place to go back and start is December 2010, the start of the then so-called Arab Spring, where there was so much hope that countries in the Middle East, that had been ruled by dictators for decades, would finally have democratic governments, would finally have governments where all people, regardless of their religion, would have opportunity. But we look today, four years on from the start of the Arab Spring, and we see the situation has actually gone from bad to worse. Almost in every country there have been humanitarian and economic disasters. If you look at the case of Syria, even since this motion was tabled the figures and statistics have gotten worse. Only last week, a humanitarian organisation in Syria, Al-Marsad, reported that there have been 210,000 people killed since the war broke out in 2011. Additionally to that, two million people have been injured, and 1.5 million have been left disabled in some way. For children, they quote the number of 10,664 killed, and 6,783 for women.
Also, foreign fighters are attracted to the country. Almost 25,000 non-Syrians have been killed in the civil war, including 640 belonging to Hezbollah. Our lessons to be learnt from this humanitarian tragedy include how fragile democracy is and how difficult it is to take root. Countries cannot just go from dictator to a democracy overnight. That is through the history of almost every democratic nation throughout the world, even our own country Australia. Before we became the Australian nation at the turn of the previous century, we had the benefit of a hundred years of British colonial rule to establish those roots and those institutions embedded in our society that enabled our democracy to thrive, prosper and grow. So to think that these democratic roots could establish in the Middle East almost overnight and that those countries could become peaceful was folly of the highest extent.

One of the great tragedies that has happened in Syria is what is happening to their Christian population. We know that before the war they were something like 10 per cent of the Syrian population, but on some figures almost 700,000 Christians have left that country—some 40 per cent of the pre-war number. I would also like to add that I have some grave reservations about some of the policies of the United States in relation to Syria. The idea of arming or financing the so-called moderate rebels is a policy that needs serious questioning and serious thinking through, for arming so-called moderates can often only be seen as throwing petrol onto the fire.

The Australian government has not been still in this. So far we have provided almost $70 million in response to the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East since 2014. We have contributed $135 million into humanitarian assistance in response to the Syrian crisis since this conflict began. That includes a total of $35 million in 2014. We have also provided funding for food, water, shelter, protection, medical assistance and education inside Syria, and over the next three years Australia will resettle 4,500 refugees. We can do what we can, but ultimately this humanitarian disaster must be solved by the Syrian people.

Debate adjourned.

Medicines and Medical Devices

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (11:29): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises the opportunities for an enhanced regulatory framework to better position Australia's health system to respond effectively to global trends in the development, manufacture, marketing and regulation of therapeutic goods, and to improve access to vital life-saving and enhancing drugs;

(2) commends the recent joint announcement by the Minister for Health and Assistant Minister for Health to undertake a review of medicines and medical devices regulations;

(3) supports the Government's Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda as a key step to removing ineffective regulation and encouraging greater competition and innovation for businesses in the medicines and medical devices industries; and

(4) applauds the Prime Minister for his recent Ministerial Statement to the House on deregulation, outlining the need to recognise trusted international approval processes to improve consumer access to therapeutic goods.

I thank the House for the opportunity to debate the important issues raised in this motion.

The health of our constituents is a matter that transcends the political bearpit that often characterises debate in this place. There is no greater duty as elected representatives than to
do everything we can to ensure our constituents have access to the latest medical technologies and best medicines, whilst ensuring that access is provided in a safe and economically responsible manner.

As the founder and Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Medicines Group, I have worked to promote the great work of our medicines and medical devices sectors and to create opportunities for members to interact with industry leaders, medical experts and patient groups to ensure we best understand and represent the health issues directly affecting our constituents. Through these events and my travels around Bennelong, I have received consistent feedback on the obstacles in our system that prevent patients from accessing the best treatments. This is no more evident than with medical devices.

As a small market, we cannot expect that global corporations will be lining up to host worldwide launches of new technologies or new generations of devices in Australia. Competitor First World markets offer far greater uptake and opportunity. Regardless, we should do everything we can to create a smooth process for these medical technologies to be made available to Australians at the earliest opportunity. And yet, despite the vast majority of therapeutic approval checks being identical to those of comparable nations like the United States, Canada or the UK, we still require companies to endure a complete rigorous approval process, meaning significant amounts of duplication and therefore delays before the products are made available in Australia.

One company told me that they had just received Australian approval for their second-generation heart stent technology, a key remedy for one of our nation’s biggest killers, whilst patients in the US and Europe were already on the fourth-generation device. Each approval process took 18 months and incurred significant costs that needed to be passed on to the consumers, together with the huge cost to government of administering the regulation, meaning that, by the time a new stent was available for use, it had already been superseded and came at a considerably higher price.

I am very supportive of the need for a regulatory system that ensures safety and efficacy at the centre of approvals. However, when I questioned this company about how many of their devices had required even a single modification over their many years operating in Australia, the answer was zero. That is hundreds of thousands of dollars and many years in delays that had, in hindsight, been for nothing. Clearly, something has to change.

In October last year I was honoured to host the Prime Minister and the Minister for Health in Bennelong as we toured the facilities of Cochlear, one of Australia's most successful innovation companies. The cochlear implant has changed the lives of tens of thousands of people worldwide, yet some patients overseas could receive a better implant at a cheaper price prior to Australians. I was therefore delighted to witness the Prime Minister inform the House that, as part of this government's second repeal day, the Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda was launched to directly address this issue. As a result of this policy, Cochlear is now eligible to use European Union certification to streamline and speed up the certification of its products by the TGA. This is a victory for common sense and an even bigger victory for people in our community disadvantaged by disability.

Two days after this speech, the Minister for Health and the Assistant Minister for Health announced an independent review of medicines and medical devices regulation to be conducted by three eminent experts. The review is examining the TGA's regulatory
framework and processes to identify areas of unnecessary or ineffective regulation that can be streamlined without impacting on safety. As the Prime Minister concluded in his speech that day, I am proud of the progress that we have made so far and I pledge that there is much more yet to come, just as I am proud to be a member of this government, delivering real solutions for our local constituents on some of our most important policy challenges. I commend this motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (11:34): I second the motion. I thank the member for introducing the motion. It gives me great pleasure to second it. It gives me an opportunity to speak on the importance of health care and consumer safety in Australia.

Australia has a world-class system of health care underpinned by universal health care and Medicare, fair and affordable access to medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, a quality doctor and allied health professional system underpinned by excellent training, and a safe and effective system of regulating and introducing medicines, drugs and medical devices to the market. It is one of the reasons that we have some of the best health outcomes of any developed country anywhere in the world.

For all of this to continue to occur, we require certainty. We must continually review our regulatory arrangements, but we require certainty. With the importance of certainty in mind, even today we have heard some members of the government come out and say that the GP tax—an important part, according to the government, of its budget program—is about to be dumped and other members of the government saying that it is here to stay. The people of Australia require more stability and more certainty than they are currently getting from those opposite.

Why do we regulate medicines and medical devices in this country? That is on the point of safe and effective medicines and drugs that we all rely upon. It has been the role of the Therapeutic Goods Administration to provide protections to Australians, ensuring safe and effective medicines and medical devices. And the role of the agency has evolved over many years. Prior to the 1960s, regulation tended to focus on false claims made by manufacturers of medical devices and medicines and the quality of those devices and medicines.

After the 1961 discovery of the link between thalidomide in pregnancy and the incidence of congenital abnormalities in babies—and, I should say, a delay of some five years—it was Dr Jim Forbes, the then Minister for Health, who introduced the Therapeutic Goods Bill. At that time it enjoyed bipartisan support. The bill shifted the regulation towards the efficacy and safety of products that make a therapeutic claim, as well, of course, as the manufacturing processes and their quality. Labor still believes that safety of patients and the consuming public should always be at the centre of our therapeutic goods regulatory system.

Evaluating therapeutic goods for safety, quality and efficacy can, as the member for Bennelong points out, be a costly process. But the cost of getting it wrong, whether measured in patients’ lives or in the crude and unfortunate means of money, is much, much greater. So it is absolutely critical—and I do not for a moment think that the member for Bennelong, by moving this motion in the House, disagrees with me on this point—that we put patient safety and the consuming public’s interests at the centre of our regulatory system. Yes, it needs to be
risk based. Yes, it needs to be aligned with best practice within the international regulatory regime but it needs to have the interests of the consuming public at its centre.

The cost of getting therapeutic goods into the market can have an impact, obviously, on the final prices the patients, or indeed the Commonwealth, pays. As one of the major funders of goods listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods, the Commonwealth itself has a keen interest in this. But when things go wrong all focus attends to the consumer and not to the cost of the regulatory system. Indeed, the public is saying, ‘Where was the government? How could this have been allowed to occur?’ That is why we need to hasten slowly. We welcome the fact that a review has been initiated. We will not rush to judgement. We will carefully consider not only the submissions to the review but the outcomes of that review. We will form a position based on putting the interest of the consuming public first. Once again, I thank the member for Bennelong for bringing the matter before the House.

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (11:40): I rise in support of this excellent motion and for an enhanced regulatory framework for medicines and medical devices in Australia. The reality of our health system is that we have costs rising at somewhere close to 10 per cent a year. We have demands for health outcomes that are continually rising with an ageing population, and particularly with increasing incidence of chronic disease. We could fund this by continually increasing taxes every year forevermore, but Australians will never thank us for that. We know that to deliver a better health system, to deliver a health system that is affordable, that does not have costs rising at eight or nine per cent every year, year after year, we need breakthroughs. We need breakthroughs in medical technology; we need breakthroughs in how we deliver health; and we need breakthroughs in the way we fund health.

Medical technology is absolutely at the centre of that. It is constantly evolving at an extraordinary pace. For Australia and Australians a modern regulatory framework is absolutely essential to ensure that we have access to the latest treatments in a timely manner. So in October last year the Minister for Health and the Assistant Minister for Health announced that the government would undertake a review in this area with a discussion paper that is to be released in March this year.

That review is looking at how we can encourage competition and innovation in the medicine and medical device sector, which operate in a very complex and costly regulatory environment. Because it is costly, we know that through streamlining that administration, through streamlining that regulation, we cannot only bring new technologies to market faster but we can reduce the costs for taxpayers of Australia. The review is also looking at how we can take away unnecessary duplicative and ineffective regulation.

The review ties in with Australia's industry, innovation and competitiveness agenda. Specifically, where we can trust international standards and risk assessments, we should. Not only are we taking out duplication within Australia; we are looking to make sure we do not have duplication across the world. That is exactly the kind of innovative thinking that will ensure that this government delivers better government services, like health, for less.

As a first step in pursuing this agenda, the TGA is enabling Australian manufacturers to register routine medical devices using conforming approvals from European bodies—that is, we are streamlining global, not just Australian, regulation. It is important to understand that the pharmaceutical industry in Australia is a major high-tech industry. We have exports of $3.9 billion, which is a big industry in its own right. Growing fast, it employs 15½ thousand
people and spends over $400 million in product manufacturing research and development. This is an absolutely extraordinary Australian success story.

In 2012-13, the industry received $7.1 billion from the government's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, the PBS. It has been responsible for some extraordinary and incredibly important medical breakthroughs and developments, with worldwide recognition—for example, CSL's swine flu agenda, the Gardasil vaccine for human papillomavirus; therapeutics for the prevention of transplant rejection and the treatment of multiple indications in autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis; and the flu drug Relenza.

The review and its aims also tie in with this government's commitment to reducing red tape. We have prioritised streamlining overregulated sectors in our economy with two red tape repeal days, and that has already reduced annual red tape costs by over $2 billion.

The review works towards two complementary objectives for this industry: creating the best environment for innovation and job growth and encouraging more R&D and manufacturing of therapeutic goods within Australia; and at the same time, secondly, it maintains important protections for the community from substandard, unsafe and ineffective therapeutic goods.

We must ensure that our health system remains sustainable for many years to come and we must ensure that our great industries that rely on Australian smarts are successful. Sustainability of our health sector for many decades to come is absolutely central to this government's agenda, which the Labor Party ignores in its thinking about the future.

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (11:45): I thank the member for Bennelong for this motion which allows me the opportunity to talk about the kind of healthcare system that we want to see for Australia. I look forward to seeing the recommendations that will come out of this review, and hope that it aims to build upon and improve our system for the better. Our communities want us to promote better ways of providing efficient and effective delivery of healthcare services and therapeutic goods. I hope all policy reviews are set up with this end in mind, because our healthcare system truly is world class.

In Australia we have rigorous testing of medicines to ensure they meet the highest of standards. Through this system, Australians can always be confident in the safety and quality of available medicines. We have extremely well taught and educated doctors and nurses who dedicate their lives to their professions. We also have the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which aids Australians by subsidising expensive and prohibitively costly medicines. The PBS makes life-saving medicines affordable to people when they need them most. Thanks to all of this, Australia's health outcomes are amongst the best in the world. Most importantly though, we have a universal healthcare in the form of Medicare. Universal healthcare is the bedrock of our healthcare system, an essential public good that ensures vital protections for all Australians, regardless of their background or means. We have fought very hard to establish Medicare in this country.

In 1972, only 17 per cent of Australians had health insurance of any kind. Unsurprisingly, most of those people were low-income earners. Gough Whitlam, that great titan we tragically lost last year, changed all that. Gough set about creating a fair, equitable and efficient system that would provide health insurance for all Australians. There was opposition to universal healthcare then, and sadly, there is opposition to universal healthcare now. It is a little bit hard
to stomach talking about the state of our country's regulatory framework for healthcare or medicines and medical devices when a broader attack on Medicare continues unabated. However, as the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Health, I have watched on with interest as the Minister and Assistant Minister for Health announced their intent to undertake this review.

Our pharmaceutical and medical device industry is robust, competitive and flourishing. The medicine industry employs around 41,000 people. There are around 13,000 people working in the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector and 19,000 in the medical technology sector. The Therapeutic Goods Administration plays a vital role in ensuring only safe and effective medicines and medical devices are used here in Australia. The implications of this scheme are undoubtedly positive. Stringent testing and assessment are essential to ascertain the validity and quality of all therapeutic goods. These practices ensure the safety of patients will always remain the industry's primary focus.

There are, however, some costs associated with such a rigorous system. Understandably and inevitably, evaluating therapeutic goods can be a long and costly process. The process is complex in a range of ways and such stringent measures mean that innovations in the healthcare sector cannot be immediately passed onto patients. These could include things such as new therapeutic goods, which are prohibited until they are properly tested. Sadly, the duration of the testing period may mean that patients go without these drugs in the meantime. The cost of assessment can also have an impact on the final cost to the Commonwealth that patients have to pay. With this in mind, I believe there is a case to be made for a review into the regulation of therapeutic goods. We should seek harmonisation and international cooperation between regulators.

Likewise, I am interested in seeing some of the recommendations on using international standards and risk assessments in Australia. This will need to be closely reviewed, as international standards may not be as stringent as those in Australia. As someone who has worked closely with regulatory schemes in other sectors of the Australian economy, I do believe that there is much to be gained from such international harmonisation and streamlining processes. Commonality of regulation of this kind can benefit us all when different nations have consistent outcomes and objectives from their regulatory schemes.

So let's be clear. Labor only supports a regulatory framework that does not compromise the safety and quality of our system, and one that continues to put patients' safety at the centre of its approach.

Finally, Labor does thank the Prime Minister for his recent statement to the press on the need to consider international approval processes in this space. The last year has been a tough year on the beleaguered Prime Minister. We hope that whoever is Prime Minister after this week will continue this approach in the future.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (11:50): I rise to support the motion commended already by several speakers, but particularly the possibility of an enhanced regulatory framework, a full review of the medicines and medical device regulation and, in particular, the TGA and its processes.

For Australia to continue to thrive and for our health system to thrive, we must remain competitive and innovative in all sectors, particularly in our new emerging medical devices.
and pharmaceutical industries. It is also important for Australian citizens to have access to the best and the safest drugs and medical devices. But for this to occur, everything has to be affordable. Australia needs to have an efficient and thorough evaluation process of all medical devices and medications. But I am very pleased that both the previous minister for health and the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Fiona Nash, announced the TGA review within a couple of days of the Prime Minister making his announcement.

The review includes the possibility of incorporating processes that other competent related authorities overseas have already gone through and looks at competent authorities like European Medicines Agency, the FDA and the Canadian medical authority. They are also charged with looking after the safety of their citizens and they have very rigorous processes too. For us to reinvent the wheel and start from scratch seems very time-intensive and cost-intensive, so this review is really quite timely.

There is a problem in our system. I will give you a few examples: cochlear implants; coronary artery stents; endoscopic devices; new and exciting classes of drugs, like PD-1 inhibitors for late stage melanoma; new vaccines, like the zoster vaccine and the multistrand meningococcal vaccine. They all cost money, but there is a time delay and a cost delay in getting them into Australian hospitals and into Australian patients. Time costs money. A review, a quarter of a million dollars and 18 months or two years led to the farcical situation that people needing new cochlear implants in Australia were getting the base model yet there were two improvements in other models that have been available overseas for a couple of years. It was a similar situation with new coronary artery stents; we want the very best for the Australian patient.

That is the problem. I will just bring to the House's attention to what we have already done. With our red tape review we have already achieved many cost-reductions in the health portfolio by looking at unnecessary red tape. Hearing Services Australia now has an online portal for 600,000 customers and 220 businesses that interact with them. TGA submissions are already now delivered online—they were not before. So that is 24,000 items—and 170 businesses interacting with TGA can now do it all online. Research grant submissions and monitoring alone is also online. PBS script supply and claiming is being streamlined between private and public hospitals. The regulatory red-tape burden for pharmacies making claims on the PBS have had the threshold lifted to $10,000 from $5,000. All these generate cost savings to the department, hence the taxpayer, which means there is more money to spend on the actual drug or device delivery.

With this review the most important thing to remember is that we are not going to replace TGA. The sovereign sign-off of Australian approval is critical. We have a gold standard; TGA approval is well regarded around the world, and going through TGA approval is a great marketing tool for any device or any medicine, and that is because we are so rigorous. But that rigour can use stuff that has been done already. Not only do we have to do that, but also the investment and growth of our $4 billion pharmaceutical industry and medical device industry relies on us being competitive with other countries. Our R&D tax regime is effective, but our development of IP and data exclusivity is way inferior to other countries, and that is something we also need to put on the table. *(Time expired)*

**Mr CHAMPION** (Wakefield) (11:55): I commend the member for Bennelong for this motion and I pay tribute to all the other speakers. I think it has been a sensible debate about
this review into the TGA and about some of the issues that the industry is facing; the need to maintain a rigorous patient-first TGA that puts the safety of people first, both for medicines and for medical devices.

The shadow minister made it clear in his speeches that one of the key things we are looking for in all these processes is certainty. And that is exactly what we have not seen from the government. Today is a classic example of the uncertainty that they have thrown into the mix for the people of Australia. It has spread from health outwards into other areas of government. Of course we know they have worried every general practitioner in Australia and every patient of a general practitioner in Australia with their GP tax or their ‘co-payment’; first of all it was $7 and then it was an attack on fee-for-service models for general practice. We know tremendous uncertainty was introduced into people's primary healthcare arrangements. We know our pharmaceuticals have been driven up. We know there are $80 billion in cuts; $50 billion in health. We know that a scoping study into the privatisation of Australian Hearing. There are many people out there who are uncertain about the services that they will get. The very good services that are currently provided by Australian Hearing may be privatised, and of course the uncertainty related to that is very worrying for all of those Australians with a hearing issue. They have introduced unparalleled uncertainty into the healthcare of all Australians and those working within the health sector.

We have heard Cochlear talked about a number of times. In late January—30 January this year—I paid a visit to the Australian Hearing Hub, which I think is in the electorate of Bennelong, at Macquarie University. With Doug Cameron, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of organisations, and I would just like to list them and thank them for welcoming us and giving us such a great demonstration of all of the really wonderful things that are happening out there in research, technology, service provision and of course jobs and exports in this area. We had the opportunity to meet with: Macquarie Speech and Hearing Clinic, Centre for Cognition and its Disorders, Cochlear, The Shepherd Centre, Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, Sydney Cochlear Implant Centre and Australian Hearing and National Acoustic Laboratories.

As I said before, it is hard not to be very impressed indeed by the Hearing Hub and the services that are provided there, and the research that is being done there—not just into hearing but into its effects on cognition and its relationship with other cognitive disorders, like Alzheimer's. I learnt a lot about the research they are doing—world-leading research, cutting-edge research and research that is reliant on government commitment in part, a commitment to the services provided by Australian Hearing. This centre, the Hearing Hub, was created with money out of the higher education infrastructure fund and with research grants from the ARC.

So we know that these institutions are tremendously important. We know that TGA is particularly important. Regarding regulation in this area, as the shadow minister said, we should hasten slowly. We should be very cautious about calls for efficiency; we should allow this review to be undertaken. We should be calm and methodical. And we should give certainty to people, because people need certainty around Medicare, they need certainty around their GP services, around primary care, and they need certainty around the operation of the TGA. With that, I commend the motion to the House.

Debate adjourned.
Municipal and Essential Services Program

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (12:00): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the concern of Aboriginal Western Australians about the sustainability of their remote communities in the wake of the withdrawal of municipal and essential services funding and the need to plan for members of those communities after the withdrawal of funding;

(2) recognises that local government authorities have not been consulted in any meaningful way by the Government of Western Australia on this change in responsibility and they are deeply concerned that seven months is not sufficient to make workable alternative arrangements; and

(3) calls on the Australian Government to delay the withdrawal of funding from this program until 1 July 2016.

For more than 35 years the Commonwealth has accepted responsibility for funding critical infrastructure in remote communities through the Municipal and Essential Services Program, known as MUNS. The original purpose of this program was to supplement the efforts of the states, territories and local government to deliver municipal services to Indigenous people, particularly in remote communities where, quite simply, mainstream municipal services were not available. The federal government has now determined that it is simply going to walk away from this responsibility, hand a bucket of short-term funding to a number of the state governments and simply wash its hands of all responsibility.

There is grave disquiet throughout the Pilbara and the Kimberley in Western Australia and to a lesser extent in the Goldfields. Western Australia is the community most affected by this decision. In Western Australia we have around 204 permanent remote Indigenous communities, with a population of over 12,000 people, and 164 of those communities rely on this MUNS funding in many instances to provide the basic services of power, water, rubbish disposal and sewerage.

There has been absolutely no consultation with the Aboriginal communities. The Aboriginal communities are deeply aggrieved by what has happened here—firstly, by the federal government simply walking away from their responsibility and, secondly, by the approach that has been taken by the state government. The state government have taken the equivalent of three years funding for this project. After that all funding will cease. The state government's approach has been very clear. They expect that there will be a significant number of communities that will close. Indeed, it has been suggested that up to 150 communities will close.

This has caused extreme angst throughout the Aboriginal communities and within local government. I want to outline some of the concerns. When this announcement was made and the Premier indicated that up to 150 communities may well close there were lots of protests. The local governments received an email on 25 November saying that the department of local government would be advising that there would be a meeting of local government planning committees on the municipal service implementation. To date—and we are less than five months from D-day—there have been no terms of reference developed, there has been no committee called and no committee has met. So we have got five months before D-day—before these contracts that have been issued by the Commonwealth cease to apply—and there has been nothing put in place.
Of course the Aboriginal communities are distraught. I met this morning with Michelle Nelson-Cox, who chairs the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia. She with many senior people across Western Australia, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, recently put a letter in the paper talking about how outrageous it was that there was a suggestion that many of these small communities would be closed down.

The recent debate about funding to local Aboriginal communities does not recognise their importance to Aboriginal people or the cultural asset they are to both the state and the nation. The debate does not recognise the important role Aboriginal people play as custodians of the land and its conservation values. There is no doubt that improvements to services are needed in many communities but, given their importance to the health, the well-being and the continuing culture of Aboriginal people, governments should invest in these communities rather than simply withdraw services.

These concerns are echoed by local government. The Pilbara Regional Council on Friday in a discussion with me said that local government has still not been advised of any formal process to manage the Commonwealth exit from MUNS and is completely in the dark regarding services to be transitioned, time frames for transition and costs for both the transition into the future and community closures. Mixed messages are coming from the state government, and the federal government claim it is no longer their problem. The state government is in chaos on this point. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): Is the motion seconded?

Ms PRICE (Durack) (12:06): I will second the motion if that helps. I rise to speak on this private member's motion which is of fundamental concern to me and my constituents of Durack. I acknowledge the disquiet among some Aboriginal Western Australians about the sustainability of remote communities in the wake of the withdrawal of the municipal and essential services federal funding and the need to plan for members of those communities that are now the WA state's responsibility. I recognise that local governments must be consulted by the government of Western Australia on this change and that sufficient time and certain measures are required to make workable alternative arrangements. This change in responsibility for municipal and essential services has understandably created a dichotomy of opinions that are both emotional and financial in nature.

First, I will give a bit of useful background information. There are 274 remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia, with the majority of them in my seat of Durack. As we have heard, they are across the Pilbara, Kimberley, Gascoyne, Midwest and also in the northern wheat belt. There are 1,309 Aboriginal people living in 174 of the smallest communities. That is an average of just 7.5 people in each of those 174 communities. Across 115 of those communities there are 507 people in total. That is an average of 4.4 people in each community.

Yes, responsibility for services such as water, power and infrastructure lies with the state and local governments. Yes, the Commonwealth has, in the past, provided support to these remote communities. Now the West Australian government will need to provide these services for their remote Aboriginal communities, as it does for every other town and city. I do not think there is any argument there. Those opposite might recall that the previous Rudd government acknowledged that these services are indeed a state responsibility, but sadly failed to do anything about it at that time. Our federal government has taken the decision to
change, made an agreement with Premier Barnett, provided some funding and extended contracts with service providers.

I met with the Premier of Western Australia, the Hon. Colin Barnett, over the Christmas break (1) to discuss the servicing of these communities; (2) to confer my concerns; and (3) to exchange views about the transition, timing and long-term planning and potential issues. As the member for Durack, I met with the Premier because I wanted to impress upon him the need to consult broadly. I wanted to understand his plan, I wanted to understand what the state government's plan was and I wanted to have my say on behalf of the Durack constituents. I am pleased with what I heard and trust that I can ease the anxiety of those opposite. The Premier assured me that the state government will work through a detailed process to determine how best to proceed. To quote the Hon. Colin Barnett:

A detailed process ... that is, to ensure funding is invested in sustainable and healthy communities that can offer improved opportunities and outcomes for residents, especially children. No decision has yet been made to close any of Western Australia's remote communities. We will work through the issues and consult widely with residents about how together we can make things work better and improve outcomes.

WA knows that it needs a strategic approach and the withdrawal of commonwealth funding has promoted this.

The West Australian government had recognised that serious reform is required to address the disparity between the living standards of Aboriginal people in remote locations and the rest of the West Australian community. Despite efforts by successive governments there is still a shortfall of economic opportunities in remote communities in Western Australia. The ad hoc approach to investment that occurred under successive governments will be replaced by investment targeted to those locations which can provide a viable platform for promoting opportunities and enabling access to education, employment, quality health services, housing and safe communities.

Very importantly, I am informed that funding has been provided that will see services continue for at least the next 12 to 18 months. Any changes after that will be incremental and involve close consultation with affected communities. Local government and stakeholders will be consulted as part of the process over the next 12 months. As recently as last week, the Premier's office confirmed that I shall receive an update on the consultation and other transitional processes over the next period. In closing, I do acknowledge the concerns and the requirement for extensive consultation and am of the view that the WA government plans to do just that. (Time expired)

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (12:11): I commend the member for Perth for this motion. When we were in government, in our last budget we provided $44.1 million to assist 340 remote communities with power, water, sewage services, garbage collection and road maintenance. These are tiny little communities around the country in places like Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania. The truth is that all Australians expect essential services to be provided in these communities as well as in major capital cities like Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. This was in addition to the $221 million we committed over 10 years under the Stronger Futures package. These kinds of services include dog control, accounting administration services, electricity, garden and road maintenance, animal control, and environmental health services.
But what has this government done since they came to power? What they have done here is undertake what they call a historic deal by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, who should hang his head in shame. What he did—let's not mince words—was put a financial gun to the heads of the states and territories. That is what he did. He said, 'We will give you some money and you are on your own.' He said to the Western Australians, 'Here is $90 million and we will let you do whatever you want'—with no conditionality whatsoever, no consultation with homeland communities, no consultation with these remote communities which absolutely need this funding. The Abbott government have redrawn federal funding for municipal services. This type of funding was provided by both sides of politics, by Labor and the coalition, for decades and decades. It is a disgrace and they have done it without adequate consultation with these communities.

When the Western Australian government announced that they were closing about 164 communities across remote areas like the Pilbara and the Kimberley there was a hue and cry, not just from Indigenous leaders on the left but also from the right. So we have seen this procrastination, but we know that that is the decision that they have made. They are going to engage in forced removal and relocation, and the federal minister said, 'It's not my responsibility.' What do people in the urban areas expect but good services in these remote communities. In these Indigenous communities, 38,000 indigenous Australians are at risk of forcible removal and relocation because of the Abbott government's decision, the lack of consultation and the lack of conditionality on this funding—leaving Western Australian communities and remote areas at the mercy of the Barnett government. That is what has happened as a result of this decision.

So this is a government that cut $534 million from Indigenous affairs in their first budget. This decision has to be seen in context, and then they have completely messed up the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and cut funding everywhere: family violence prevention centres, Prisoner ThroughCare, antirecidivism programs; the National Congress of Australia' First Peoples defunded; and the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Service Program utterly defunded.

The shambolic way they have conducted Indigenous affairs is clearly evident by the decisions they have made. What have they done? Particularly relevant to Western Australia and this motion before the chamber today, they have reneged on a commitment to justice targets to reduce Indigenous incarceration rates and improve community safety. What about these communities that are now at risk in Western Australia?

They want to get the kids to school—we support getting kids to school. We want to make sure kids go to school, finish primary and high school and get good jobs; and that skills and talents are fostered to make sure they participate in community. But you cannot do that if you are cutting the funding and forcibly relocating communities. People have lived for millennia in parts of Western Australia, and what does the Abbott government do? It says: 'Bye-bye. We'll wash our hands like Pontius Pilate. You can have some money. We'll have nothing to do with this anymore'.

This is a Prime Minister who said he was going to be Prime Minister for Indigenous affairs and would indeed be at the front and heart of the centre of decision making in this government. What have they done? Cut. Cut. Cut, and Closing the Gap is a fiction under this government. We will see in the next couple of days, with the Closing the Gap report and this
motion before the chamber—the MUNS funding, the lack of consultation, and the consequences to remote communities in WA—that it is clear the Abbott government has failed Indigenous Australia.

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (12:16): In joining with my colleague, the member for Durack, there are 274 remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia containing approximately 15,000 residents. Of these, 150 communities are in the Kimberley region and are not considered sustainable or viable, because of poor health and education standards, and social problems such as domestic violence and child abuse.

I quote figures released by the Premier of Western Australia’s office stating that there were 1,309 Aboriginal people living in 174 of the smallest communities, with an average of 7.5 people in each community. That is effectively one family per community and is clearly not viable to sustain employment or service delivery. In one particular community, it is estimated to cost the taxpayer $85,000 per person per year to provide municipal services such as water and sewerage.

Whilst the traditional and cultural connection of Indigenous people to their land is acknowledged and respected, it must also be recognised that modern Aboriginal people have embraced certain aspects of Western culture and, as such, they expect modern conveniences and services to be provided. By necessity, provision of these services requires a critical mass of population to be feasible and logistically viable. Sustainable communities are those that provide strong employment opportunities, are economically sustainable, have infrastructure capable of maintaining the community and a strong governance structure. Clearly, remote communities with fewer than 10 residents are unable to be sustained in the long term.

The delivery of municipal and essential services, including the supply of power and water and the management of infrastructure is a state and local government responsibility—despite this, the Commonwealth has been supporting these services in remote Indigenous communities for decades. In Western Australia, the state is the major funder of 94 camps, whilst the Commonwealth has historically funded the remaining 180 to the tune of approximately $45 million a year.

The Abbott government recently reached historic agreements with the Queensland, Western Australian, Victorian and Tasmanian governments that will see these states assume full responsibility for municipal and essential services. The involvement of the Commonwealth represents a duplication of services and results in inconsistent and ad hoc services for residents in these remote communities.

Funds which should be directed towards closing the gap are being tied up in the delivery of basic services that are the responsibility of the states. The Commonwealth is not withdrawing from its responsibilities but rather assisting state governments to take up their responsibilities for provision of municipal and essential services to Indigenous communities—something the states provide for every other town and city within their state.

The WA government has agreed to these arrangements and will be working with local governments, service providers and communities as it would in any other part of the state to deliver municipal services. To support the transition to these new funding arrangements in WA, this government has extended existing contracts until 30 June 2015 and provided a transitional funding agreement. Under the arrangement, the Commonwealth will provide $90
million to WA for a two-year transition. This agreement demonstrates how this government is delivering outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by ensuring responsible stewardship of public funds to obtain value for money.

The Commonwealth is not shutting down communities nor is it asking the WA government to do so. This is entirely a matter for WA and has nothing to do with the Commonwealth’s decision to end municipal and essential services funding. The WA government has been discussing the closure of remote Indigenous communities for a number of years—well before it agreed to take on responsibility for municipal services in these communities.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): 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 sitting.

**BILLS**

- Customs Amendment (Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014
- Customs Tariff Amendment (Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014
- Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014
- Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges (Amendment) Bill 2014
- Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014
- Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Bill 2014
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill 2014
- Social Security Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Job Seeker Compliance Framework) Bill 2014
- ACT Government Loan Bill 2014
- Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (2014 Measures No. 6) Bill 2014
- Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2014
- Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014

**Assent**

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

**COMMITTEES**

**Intelligence and Security Committee**

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (12:22): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, I table the committee's report entitled *Review of the listing of Al-Murabitun as a terrorist organisation*, and also the committee's annual reports for 2012-13.
and 2013-14. These committee reports were presented out of session on 16 December 2015 and I would like to take the opportunity to make some remarks to the House about them.

Leave granted.

Mr TEHAN: The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security is required to provide to the Parliament an annual report of its activities.

Over the period from 2012-13, the committee completed an inquiry into potential reforms to Australia's national security legislation, a review of the administration and expenditure of intelligence agencies for 2010-11, and a review of the relisting of five terrorist organisations. The committee notes that many of the national security legislative changes brought forward in 2014 and those currently under consideration build on the work performed by this committee in the 43rd Parliament.

Over the last financial year, the committee focussed on completion of the 2011-12 and 2012-13 review of administration and expenditure for intelligence agencies, and continued its oversight work in regard to new listings and the re-listings of a number of terrorist organisations. These are important scrutiny functions of the committee, and the committee thanks the agencies for their cooperation in the conduct of these reviews.

Also presented on 16 December 2014 was the committee's report on the listing of Al-Murabitun as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Criminal Code). The committee fully supported the listing of Al-Murabitun.

Al-Murabitun formed in August 2013 on the amalgamation of two regional extremist groups, both of which originated as splinter groups of al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb. The committee was satisfied that Al-Murabitun is engaged in terrorist activities, including attacks against Western civilian targets, and that it advocates terrorist acts against France and its allies. The group also potentially threatens Australians and Australian interests in Africa.

Al-Murabitun is not engaged in any peace processes and has been listed by the United Nations and a number of other governments. The group has pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda's senior leadership.

This is the first time the group has been listed as a terrorist organisation by the Australian government. The listing makes it an offence to direct the activities, become a member of, recruit, train or receive training, get funds to, from or for Al-Murabitun, and provide support for or associate with Al-Murabitun.

The committee supported the listing of Al-Murabitun as a terrorist organisation and did not recommend disallowance of the regulation.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my fellow committee members, both past and present, for their valuable contribution to the committee over these years. I also place on record my thanks to the secretariat and the people who have helped with the drafting of these reports. I commend these reports to the House.

Reports made parliamentary papers in accordance with standing order 39(e).
Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (12:26): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services, I present the committee's report of its inquiry into proposals to lift professional, ethical and education standards in the financial services industry. I seek leave to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Mr SUKKAR: This issue has been a hot topic, so I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to present a report on the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services' inquiry into proposals to lift the professional, ethical and education standards in the financial services industry.

Whilst the committee concluded its work on the inquiry late last year, today presents the first opportunity to present the report to the House.

The period of time in which the inquiry was conducted has been a period of significant change and scrutiny of the financial advice industry.

Whilst the committee has sought to acknowledge that increasing the professional, ethical and educational standards applied to the financial advice industry is only one of a range of means by which consumer's interests can be protected, it is of course an important mechanism to help reduce the risk of industry failure.

The committee's recommended approach to increasing safeguards for consumers includes the following:

- Clarifying who can provide financial advice by changing the terms 'general advice', and 'personal advice' and requiring individuals to be registered in order to provide financial advice;
- Setting a standard for the qualification and competence requirements of financial advisers through the establishment of an industry based independent finance professionals education council; and
- Enhancing professional standards and ethics by requiring financial advisers to be members of a professional association which has a code of ethics compliant with a professional standards scheme under the Professional Standards Councils.

The committee further recommends that the finance professionals education council set and monitor the educational framework that applies to all financial advisers, which includes requirements for a degree qualification, an assessment of competence through a structured professional year, a registration exam and mandatory ongoing professional development.

The committee also recommends that the finance professionals education council approve pathways for experienced advisers and career change professionals to meet educational and professional year requirements.

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank all of those involved in providing advice to the committee and I thank the secretariat for their tireless report. I commend the report to the House.

Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).
Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (12:29): It is my great pleasure to be speaking on this matter. The Fair Work Amendment (Bargaining Processes) Bill 2014 was introduced into parliament, into the House of Representatives, last year, before Christmas, and a lot of water has passed under the bridge in terms of the policies and subject matter of the bill but also in terms of the political process. Of course, this morning we witnessed the spectacle of a party room meeting where certain members of the government, 39 of them, declined to endorse the policy direction of the existing government—a full two-thirds of the backbench, I am advised. Perhaps it is that same life-shortening instinct that moved those 39 MPs to vote that way that has so abbreviated the speaking list on this particular subject matter before the House today, because normally, when a matter dealing with industrial relations regulation comes before the House, we see coalition member after coalition member stumble into this place, waving their arms around about the tyranny of unions, waving their way through last year's talking points—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): Well, there's not very many on your side speaking on this legislation!

Mr STEPHEN JONES: failing to address the subject matter before the House.

Mr Chester: Which you're about to do!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, which you are about to do.

Mr STEPHEN JONES: The subject matter before the House concerns amendments to the Fair Work Act which would change the bargaining processes. Those from the coalition ranks who often speak on these matters feel that their contributions are the first time that a ray of sunshine has visited the House and visited the subject matter, but they always refuse to acknowledge that this is probably the most contested area of public policy debate, a matter that has been the subject of every federal election since Federation and a matter that is genuinely reviewed in fine detail once or twice throughout the term of every government. Those facts generally escape members of the coalition when they contribute to these debates.

What does the bill do? First, it puts in place a statutory mandate that parties engaging in collective bargaining negotiation for an agreement to be registered under the Fair Work Act talk about productivity. You could almost imagine, if this is something that warrants the legislature's attention, that we might also insert an amendment into the act that parties engaging in workplace relations negotiations should breathe oxygen, because it is that level of paternalistic nitpicking that finds its way into this legislation.

I can understand why members of the coalition are intensely embarrassed about their failure when it comes to productivity, because during their time in government we have seen, and particularly during the era of Work Choices we saw, one of the most abominable records of any federal government when it comes to productivity. They promised, in introducing Work Choices into the House, that productivity would soar. It did not. It plummeted. They
promise that the single link that is missing in the chain that will drive productivity enhancements in this country is not investment in infrastructure and it is not investment in education; it is going after workers' wages and conditions and, if only those on this side of the House would get out of the way and enable the coalition members to go after workers' wages and conditions, we would see productivity in this country saw.

We disagree with that. We disagree with it on the basis of the facts and on the basis of the hard yards that Labor have done when it comes to productivity-enhancing changes, even in the area of workplace relations. Let us not forget it was a Labor government, throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, that oversaw a significant rewrite of the 1904 Conciliation and Arbitration Act, resulting in the 1988 Industrial Relations Act, which introduced for the first time a statutory provision for collective bargaining that would be recognised by the act, and then again the 1992 reforms, which further enhanced the capacity for collective bargaining. Then, after the failed experiment with Work Choices, it fell again to Labor to introduce changes to the industrial relations laws, to ensure that the coalition's allergic obsession with collectivism was replaced with a sensible, effective, moderate proposition which enabled effective bargaining through collective representatives.

Deputy Speaker, if ever you want one example of the coalition's wrongheaded obsession in this area, just attend yourself to this fact: under the Work Choices legislation, there were no fewer than six different forms of workplace agreements provided for, each with their own scientific tests for regulation and each with their own byzantine regulations and processes for certification and regulation. There were six different types of agreements provided for under the workplaces relations act. When we came to government, we swept aside all of that and put in place a streamlined process for a single form of agreement making, with collective representation and the processes overseen by the Fair Work Commission, and let the parties get on with the business of negotiating and driving productivity and fair wage outcomes in a workplace.

If you want an example of the coalition's wrongheaded obsession with overregulation and the wrong sort of regulation, just turn your mind to that: six different forms of collective agreement when they last had their opportunity, with a Senate which would give the green light to anything they put up. There were six different forms of collective agreement making with all sorts of different and difficult regulatory arrangements in place before the workers and their employers could get on with business.

We understand that there is intense embarrassment on that side of the House about their failed productivity agenda. We were not surprised that they have effectively outsourced it to the Productivity Commission. Make no mistake about this: in deciding to refer workplace relations matters to the Productivity Commission, where everything is on the table, what the coalition and the government are saying is, 'We have outsourced our thinking on this because we do not have a clue and we cannot carry the public debate.' That is what they did when they outsourced policy development and research to the Productivity Commission on this matter. They were throwing in the towel and saying, 'We are clueless when it comes to workplace relations reform.' When you look at their record on this matter, is it any wonder that they have had to do that?

I now talk about some of the other specific provisions within the bill. You have to wonder what has motivated the government. A close reading of the legislation and the explanatory
memorandum, particularly the sections of the bill that go to protective action ballots, you have to ask yourself, 'What is motivating this?' because it is certainly not clear on the face of it. As the explanatory memorandum points out, the purpose of this part of the amendments within the bill is to put in place additional statutory tests before the Fair Work Commission certifies or permits a protected action ballot to proceed. The first of these arises from the decision of the full bench of Fair Work Australia in TMS and the Maritime Union of Australia. The legislation effectively takes the decision of the full bench and places it within the legislation. On the face of it you might say, 'What's wrong with that? Why aren't we doing it?' Because each and every application for a ballot before Fair Work Australia must meet the test that was set down. This is not a new decision. It is now 2015. This was a decision of the full bench in 2009. So you have to wonder: 'What is it that has driven the urgency of having this particular part of the bill before the House'—completely otiose in our opinion.

The second part of the bill goes to a new test that Fair Work Australia must satisfy itself when determining whether a protected action ballot should proceed. The new test is that it must be satisfied that the applicant's claims are not manifestly excessive, having regard to the conditions at the workplace and the industry in which the employer operates. I want you to think about this for a moment. The whole notion of the collective bargaining stream within the Fair Work Act was effectively to get Fair Work Australia out of the bargaining room and let the industrial parties, the employer and their employees get around a negotiating table and negotiate these agreements. If they should fail, they may have resort to protected industrial action—either the employer or the employee. But, when you are putting a provision within the legislation which asks the tribunal to make a binding determination on whether the provisions of a claim are manifestly excessive or not, you are providing a de facto arbitration on the matters which are subject of that dispute. Make no mistake about it: when you are putting a provision within the legislation that says that a protected action ballot may not proceed, if, in the opinion of Fair Work Australia the claims that are at dispute between the parties are manifestly excessive, you are giving Fair Work Australia the right to determine that matter and to arbitrate on a subject matter between the parties.

The penny may not have dropped on the other side that that is effectively what they are doing, but, make no mistake about it, in the rough and tumble of industrial relations and in the way these things play out in the workplace, that is exactly what will happen: there will be a dispute between employer and employee. The employer may refuse to accede to the claims or the employees may refuse to accede to the claims of the employer. One or the other may seek a protected action ballot. You can bet your bottom dollar that one of the objections to that protected action ballot proceeding will be that the claims of one party or the other are manifestly excessive. In determining that part of the dispute, they will in effect be determining the whole of the dispute and will be inserting themselves into the bargaining process.

I am almost certain that those on the other side—who will come in here and wave their hands around, using last year's speaking points and talking about the evil of red tape in industrial relations legislation in this country—will not have picked this up. They will not understand it. In spite of all the division that has gone on in their party room today, what binds them together is their abhorrence of anything that has to do with collectivism and their
Mr LAMING (Bowman) (12:44): Maybe we will swing back to reality here and talk about just how important it is when bosses and workers get together and are mature enough on both sides to come to agreements in 99 per cent of cases—how that focus has to be on productivity. That is the future.

I have made many statements in the last couple of weeks about the increased challenges in 2015. Australia is not alone, but obviously we are moving from a mineral-dependent economy—rocks and crops—to a post-mining future. Having young Australians carve out a living in reasonably-earning professions outside of mining is going to be an enormous challenge for whoever is in power. Certainly, as we see developing economies with a subsiding appetite for our commodities that chastens us deeply to make sure that we have jobs for the 140,000 young Australians leaving school and who cannot even pick up a broom or find a job to do. That has to be a massive social challenge for any government, regardless of which side of the fence it is on.

As I said, when bosses and workers get together it is our belief that for 99 per cent of the time they can do so in a mature and good-faith way. But—let's face it—there is a little bit of evil on both sides and, at the extremes often that cannot occur. That is why we rely on fair work legislation and on the commission in particular to assist that process forward. In doing that, this side of politics worries about productivity and that side of politics relies on beating up one side of the argument and doing their best to run interference on what are the mature decisions made by workers. That is a very patronising view of the world but one that is deeply ingrained.

Obviously, we would like to see a chance for mature adults to talk first and come to some kind of reasoned agreement. We would like to think that when offers and responses are put on the table that, to the average read by an ordinary Australian, it seems to be done in good faith—that they are not unrealistic or completely implausible. We are not talking about 30 per cent pay rises over four years, or being able to stop work at a moment's notice and hold your boss hostage and all that sort of stuff. That is all patently ridiculous but, strangely so, still possible under Labor changes. I guess that what we want to see on this side is that when there is protected industrial action it does not just happen before negotiation even begins—the sort of 'go directly to jail and pay $200' approach that we saw from Labor where there is really just no proper and meaningful consultation. And we had plenty of evidence of union bosses regarding themselves as above the law. Once you start with one party with that view it is almost impossible to come to these productive arrangements that other economies overseas seem to be able to do because they have moved on from this highly immature, two-party approach. There is one approach that says people can come to these agreements—and we see workplaces where that occurs—but as I do concede, there are the rare examples where we are going to need legislation and we are going to need a Fair Work Commission to assist in that process.

So the Fair Work Amendment (Bargaining Processes) Bill 2014 simply says that if you are going to apply for a protected action that there are going to be a few basic requirements. We know that the ballot is still held by the Fair Work Commission but, more importantly, we need information provided to the commission about exactly what is being sought in protection...
action ballot orders. To do that, I think it is utterly reasonable that the union has to demonstrate the steps that it has taken. After all, it is the unions that are the pros in these arrangements, right? They go from workplace to workplace with fully-rehearsed arrangements. Often, these bosses only renegotiate these arrangements every two, three or more years; for them, this is an occasional occurrence. But for the hard-core pros it is their full-time business, making life as miserable as possible for those who are trying to strike otherwise productive agreements.

So we want to see from unions that appropriate steps have been taken, that they have at least tried to engage the employer. No matter where you go, you have these stories where they barge into the office and unilaterally stamp down their arrangements on the table and say, 'We're the boss. This is what's going to happen. If you try and fight us it will only get uglier for you,' and all this sort of stuff. Whether that is all just apocryphal, you would have to ask bosses. But there are plenty of stories where the whole negotiation process starts off on the wrong foot.

Secondly, of course, the case has to be stated. What we are asking for is for unions actually to demonstrate that they have told the employer what they are chasing before they have embarked on this process. Then, of course, you would expect that if you are going to make an initial offer—and often what we see is copycat pattern bargaining within a sector and between workplaces. The old union tactic, of course, is to negotiate an agreement, go to the next worksite, start from that agreement and ratchet it up a little bit more. If anyone wants to know where the boom time was squandered, it was squandered by doing these agreements that did not relate to productivity at all but just related to how much people could be paid for doing as little as possible. That is obviously what got us into the pickle we are in, paying people working in our mining sector almost double what the United States pays for an equivalent-trained miner doing exactly the same job. It is an average of $68,000 in America compared to $108,000 in Australia. Good luck competing under those conditions!

Of course, the union has to respond to offers or counterproposals. In many cases the unions just cannot wait to get into the business of tearing up agreements, creating destabilisation and pulling everyone off the worksite, because that is what they do best! But I think that what we are asking for here is utterly reasonable; that we give reasonable people who have an open mind to striking an agreement a chance to get that to happen. This is all based on a leading decision of the Fair Work Commission, based on what the relevant considerations are that they think should be looked at before authorising an industrial action ballot.

Up till now we have seen these unrealistic claims too many times for us to completely ignore them and too many times for us to do nothing about them—manifestly excessive. There will be a number of those examples given by those who, while having a seat in this place, are more intimately acquainted with experiences with the unions. Now, we are not about to say that they are all bad and we are all good. I conceded at the start of this speech that there is a range of participants in this, just like we generally find in the world that there are people who exploit the system on both sides of it. We are just trying to allow for the sensible centre to get on with doing what they do best, which is drawing up arrangements with their bosses and getting mutual agreement first of all on the way in which they spend their hours at the workplace, what they do and what the agreed targets are between them and their employer about productivity and contribution to the workplace.
Too often, this starts from a completely bellicose and hostile arrangement. I think this bill makes an important step. It focuses on what I think is the No. 1 word for the next 12 to 24 months: in this country it will be about ‘productivity’. It is going to be about how we can get the best possible outcomes in the workplace, the best possible outputs and, of course, the strongest possible sectors to compete with—and let me be frank—international competitors: our trading competitor economies, which are at every step prepared to take our markets.

There have been some changes with the changes to currency but there will be no substitute for getting Australia back on the productivity track, being as competitive as possible and, where we can, allowing bosses and unions to strike their own agreements without molestation and interference from trade unions.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (12:52): Just imagine if the government said to every small business in this country, 'You are not allowed to enter into a contract with a supplier unless you have discussed with that supplier the impact of that contract on how you run your business,’ if this government said, 'We are going to say to every milk bar you cannot enter into a contract with a local bread supplier unless you have discussed with the bread supplier the impact of that contract on how you run your milk bar,’ or if they said, 'We are not going to let you enter into any contract unless you have discussed the impact on your business and you front up to the ACCC and prove that you have done it with a stat dec or by jumping in the witness box to explain to a third-party regulator that you have discussed this matter,’ you would have every small business in this country and probably every like-minded person lining up to condemn the government—not only condemn the government; they may in fact quote some of the government's words back to them. They may say to the government, 'It is not your role to come in and tell us how to conduct our businesses.' They may say to the government, 'You've told us that deregulation is your agenda and you are getting rid of laws that tell us how to run our business so you should not be going ahead with this.' That is exactly what this government is doing with respect to workplace relations with this bill, the Fair Work Amendment (Bargaining Processes) Bill 2014.

This government is saying you cannot strike an agreement in your workplace between an employer and employees unless you have talked about the things that we, the government, want you to talk about and you can front up and prove it to a third-party umpire. This bill shows the utter hypocrisy of the Liberals when it comes to questions of looking after people's rights at work, because every other day the government comes in here and says ‘We have to repeal every law that tells people how they run their businesses,’ yet when it comes to laws that might give workers some rights, they cannot come in here quick enough to make sure the government has a seat at every negotiating table in every workplace negotiation around this country and that the government is there ticking off on what people can and cannot say in their workplaces. Not only does it expose the utter hypocrisy of the Liberal Party when it comes to so-called small government; it also exposes their willingness to extend the reach of government right down into every discussion in every workplace in this country, if that is what their masters ask them to do.

All you have to do is have a look at what this bill does not talk about. The government is quite happy about saying, 'We are going to tell you what you are allowed to discuss in your workplace.’ Does it say you have to have a discussion about safety, about how to make sure people's rights are protected and that everyone who turns up to work at the start of the day
knows they are going to be able to go home to their family safe and uninjured? Does it say you have to discuss that? No. Does it say every workplace has to discuss how it is going to close the gender pay gap between men and women, which we know exists in this country and which report after report tells us about? No. They are not interested in that. Does it say you have to discuss how to look after child care in your workplace? No. Does it say you have to discuss work-life balance? No. It does not say that. We know work-life balance is one of the pressing issues and what former Prime Minister John Howard called a barbecue stopper, and we know that in this country we do a very bad job at matching up the hours people want to work with the hours that they actually work. Does it say you have to discuss how you are going to give training to young people to help address youth unemployment? No. It does not say you have to discuss that. The Liberals do not care about any of those things. What it does say is that before you can approve an agreement, you have to make sure that people have not asked for too much money. It says you cannot approve the right for people to take action in support of an agreement if you think they are asking for too much money. Well, thank you, Liberal Party, for looking after people's rights at work!

You will notice that it is only one-sided. What we have seen when this government is in the position of employer is that they are quite happy to turn up to public servants and say: 'We want you to work an extra half an hour for free. We want you to work extra hours for nothing.' Why is it that if an employee asks for a pay rise the commission is able to judge whether or not it is too excessive, but there is nothing in this bill to stop an employer asking someone to work more for free? That speaks volumes of the agenda of this government: there is nothing manifestly excessive about asking people to work extra hours for free, but there is, apparently, if you are working in the resources sector in a mining boom, asking for a share of the spoils. Let us just look at that for a moment.

This government have done nothing during the course of a once-in-a-generation—if not once-in-a-lifetime—mining boom to say, 'We are going to take a share of the spoils that are currently going largely to overseas owned companies.' Therefore, the profits are going overseas. They have done nothing to say, 'How do we take a share of that and work it to the benefit of the Australian people?' There is nothing to say, 'We are going to stop people making excessive profits by diverting some of it back to the public good.' No—if you are in the resources sector or in the mining sector, under this government you can make as much excessive profit as you like. It just means that if you are a worker in that sector you cannot front up and ask for a share of it. You cannot, in a once-in-a-generation mining boom, put your hand out and say, 'We can see you wealthy mining companies are getting most of this and we want a share.' No, that would be unlawful under this bill. You will not be entitled to bargain in that way under this bill.

This is another very clear expression of the government's agenda that the resources boom is only to go to those who own companies, not the people who work in the sector. If you ask for a share of the boom, you are asking for too much. Excessive profits elsewhere? Sure. But excessive—so-called—wages? No, that is not on. That is not on.

Not only that but, when you look at the minister's second reading speech, you can see the fallacy that this bill is built on. The minister in his second reading speech referred to so-called activity in Western Australia, and he said this:
For example, we have recently seen reports of protected action ballot orders made and protected industrial action threatened in pursuit of claims that would increase the salary package of marine engineers in Port Hedland by around 38 per cent over four years. The reports indicated the claim, which includes an additional month of annual leave, is on top of existing salary packages of between $280,000 and $390,000, where employees work six months of the year.

So the minister said, ‘You should pass this bill because we’ve seen reports of protected action ballot orders made where there’ve been claims of 38 per cent over four years.’

Well, that is wrong. That is wrong, and the minister should have known it was wrong because he was relying on reports that were simply not true. As the Institute of Marine and Power Engineers has made absolutely crystal clear, the dispute that was being referred to—and he was referring to marine engineers, remember—was resolved with pay claims of zero per cent, two per cent, two per cent and two per cent over four years. That was the agreement that was reached. The claims that were made in the reports were wrong from the beginning, and a complaint has been made to the Press Council about it.

What does the minister do? Does the minister say, ‘Well, I’ve seen this report; I’m going to inquire as to whether it’s true before I get up in parliament and tell people they need to pass a bill to restrict people’s rights at work because of a report that I’ve read’? No, he does not. He gets up here and makes claims about 38 per cent pay rises which are simply not right. A complaint has been made to the Press Council about this report, and we will see what the adjudication of that is.

But the minister—and I will be pursuing this during the consideration in detail stage if we get the opportunity—needs to come back in here and correct the record on that, because he is saying to the parliament, 'Pass this bill on the basis of reports of 38 per cent,' when there is a very real question mark over that, and the unions and the employees there will tell you that that is simply not right. I suspect that, when the minister does a bit of digging and looks at that, the minister will also realise that he was relying on a report that did not accord with the facts in that dispute at that moment. When the minister comes in and admits that, a plank underpinning this whole bill falls down. That, in the second reading speech, is the best that he could come up with as to why we need this bill, and there is a very big question mark over the reliance on that.

So I say this to the government: don't expect us to ever take you seriously when you talk about deregulation and getting government out of the operation of people's businesses, when you come in here with a bill like this. You come in here with a bill that says: 'We are going to sit there at every negotiating table and tell you what you can and can't talk about. We're not going to do anything about superprofits being made that don't come back and benefit the Australian people, but 83 per cent of the profits in that mining and resources sector find their way overseas. We're not going to do anything about that, but, if you're a worker who says, "I want a share of the good times as well," we're going to come down on you like a ton of bricks, and we're going to make sure that there's effectively a government official sitting at every negotiating table.' When you do that, don't expect us to ever take you seriously about deregulation. And you say you are concerned about manifestly excessive claims, but there is nothing in here stopping a government or an employer, or the government as an employer, coming and saying to public servants, 'We'd like you to work for free.' That is not excessive!
There is no bar against that. Don't expect us to ever take you seriously when you say that you care about deregulation or you care about fairness.

I know that you keep going back to the Productivity Commission and to others to try and get the answer that you want, to suggest that somehow it is the industrial relations laws of this country that are standing in the way of productivity gains. But you ignore the very, very clear analysis that shows, when you look back over recent Australian economic history, that the period of the lowest—in fact, almost zero per cent—productivity growth, the cycle of zero per cent productivity growth that happened in recent Australian economic history, was the period of Work Choices. The period that we had Work Choices in was the period of zero or close to zero per cent productivity growth over the productivity cycle. And I know you keep going back, and now we need another review because you did not get the answer that you liked last time, because the facts do not speak to it. I know you will keep trying, but that is the reality.

If you were serious about improving productivity in this country, you would look at all the things that—in my instance, in my electorate—help make a city productive. Things like people being able to get around by good public transport so that they do not spend an hour stuck in traffic improve productivity. People being able to fit their working hours to their lives and to the hours that they want to work helps improve productivity. People then, when they are at work, are there for the hours that they need to be, and then they get to go home, look after the kids and look after their other responsibilities on their own time at the time that they need to do that as well. You would build an NBN to help us improve productivity. You would plan our cities better so that people are not being continually plonked on the outskirts of our city, where housing might be cheaper, but you end up paying just as much in petrol coming into the city as you save on your mortgage. You would plan our cities better if you were really interested in improving productivity.

The government has no vision for our cities. The government has no vision our country—for doing the things that would improve productivity. All they are capable of doing is coming back here without evidence, time after time, and saying, 'We need to remove some of the basic protections that people have at work.' I am all for improving productivity, but this bill will do nothing for that. This bill is just another attempt to remove people's rights at work, and that is why it will not be supported.

**Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:07):** It is a great pleasure to rise to speak on the Fair Work Amendment (Bargaining Processes) Bill 2014. This is another of the coalition's election promises that we are delivering on. Three simple things: firstly, it requires discussions about improving productivity in our workplaces during enterprise bargaining; secondly, it ensures that applicants for protected action ballots have first sought to engage in genuine and meaningful talks; and thirdly, that the claims that are being advanced are not unrealistic.

Very surprisingly, currently under our Fair Work Act, amazingly, there is no requirement for productivity to even be discussed. This bill is all about productivity. It simply requires the Fair Work Commission to be satisfied that productivity improvements were at least discussed during the bargaining process before it can approve an enterprise agreement. The way it does that is through amending or adding a new section—section 187(1A)—into the act with the effect that, before approving an agreement, the Fair Work Commission must be satisfied that during the bargaining for that agreement improvements to productivity in the workplace were
discussed; simply discussed—nothing more, nothing less. Because, at the end of the day, the wealth of our country and our future prosperity is all about productivity.

I would like to borrow a quote used by my good friend, the member for Hume, when he referred to Paul Krugman, who again is not on our side of politics. Krugman said about productivity:

Productivity isn’t everything, but in the long run it’s almost everything. A country’s ability to improve its standard of living over time depends almost entirely on its ability to raise its output per worker.

This is not about cutting workers' wages. It is about the productivity of our nation. That is key to our wealth and our prosperity. We heard the rant from the Greens’ member for Melbourne. It took almost his entire speech before he could even mention the word ‘productivity’. It was only in the last minute that he started to mention the word ‘productivity’, and we know why—because everything the Greens do, every one of their policies, actually harms the productivity of this nation. By simply opposing everything, our productivity goes backwards, our wealth goes backwards and it harms the average citizen.

I would like to pick up a quote made by the member the Scullin in this debate—this goes back to December last year, before parliament rose. The member for Scullin said:

… I ask this question: what is the problem that this bill is trying to solve?

I do not know what rock the member for Scullin lives under if he does not know the problems that we have in this country and the problems this government must address. Only last week we had the Governor of the Reserve Bank warning about the debt and deficit problems we have in this country and saying that, unless action is taken to address those, we may never get back to surplus. That was what the Governor of the Reserve Bank raised.

To put our debt and deficit issues in some perspective, I will start with the deficit. Currently, because we have so much legislation blocked by Labor, the Greens and the other Independents in the Senate, we are, as a nation, spending $110 million every day more than we are raising. If you put that back to the average citizen, government spending is currently running—that is, $1,700 per person to every man, woman and child in this country—faster than what we are raising in revenue. If we go doorknocking around our electorates, for the average household of four, government spending is $6,800 higher than revenue. That is why there are very difficult decisions to make—because if we do not wind that spending back we simply borrow more and more money, which creates a greater interest bill next year and the year after, and we simply pass that debt on to our children and our grandchildren.

The issue that we have with the debt, and why on this side of the House we talk about it all the time, is that every time we borrow money to fund our expenditure today, it means that tomorrow we have a liability to pay the interest on that debt. If we go back to 2007, only a short time ago, our Commonwealth government had no debt. We were actually receiving money. We were receiving interest on the money that the Howard and Costello governments had put aside. Six years later, we are now paying over $1 billion in interest on that debt every month. You may well argue that it was the economic genius of the former government that sent off the $900 cheques and organised the pink batts schemes and the set-top boxes and so on. You may well argue that was economic genius, but that was done with borrowed money. And now we have to pay the interest on that debt.
Another way to put it in perspective: we are now nine days into February. This month, for those nine days, we have had to find $333 million just to pay the interest on the debt. And today, the first day of parliament this year, we are 40 days into the year. In those 40 days already this year, our interest liability that we have had to find the money for is $1.4 billion—that is, $1,400 million in interest on Labor's debt. It is money that could have gone into schools, into hospitals, into aged care, into kids with disability, into our roads and so on and so on. But it cannot go into those things because it needs to go in to the interest payments on Labor's debt. The worst thing is this goes on forever until we can start to pay it back. But at the moment, we are struggling even to pay the interest on that debt. The real concern is how the other side is in complete denial about this problem.

Over Christmas, you may have seen that ad for Nimble smart loans where there was a young woman sitting on the couch with a mobile phone who gets her mobile phone bill. All of a sudden she realises that her spending is completely out of control and goes into shock about that spending. Rather than admit that she has a problem and needs to bring her mobile phone use back to a sustainable level—what she can actually afford—she runs off and throws a tantrum. And then you see, to the rescue, comes a cool looking character dressed in a rabbit suit. His solution is not to say 'Your spending is out of control and you need to wind back your expenditure. You need to make your expenditure match your income.' No, the rabbit's solution is to simply 'nimble it' and move on. And then of course the young lady takes some celebratory selfies and everything is fine. But what the ad does not mention is there is a cost for borrowing that money. The cost in this case is a 20 per cent establishment fee and four per cent compound interest per month, which actually adds up to almost 60 per cent per annum.

Likewise, that is what the opposition fails to understand. When they go out and say, 'Spend this, spend that and keep spending,' there is an ongoing obligation not only to repay that debt but to continue to pay the interest. The opposition leader hears that guy in the rabbit suit running around telling Australians that we can keep on spending and just 'nimble it' and move on.

Another way to put our debt and deficit issues in this nation in context is to read about Greece and how after a decade of their back-to-back to budget deficits the country is on the brink of economic and social meltdown. So often we hear our debt and deficit deniers making a comparison between Australia and Greece saying, 'It is okay, we are not as bad as Greece. We can keep spending and just move on.' The way they do it is they look at our Commonwealth debt as a ratio of our GDP and compare it to Greece. Yes, using that parameter, it is low. But that parameter does not give the full context of our debt. It is misleading because GDP is not taxation revenue from the government and it certainly does not look at what the most important thing is—the cost of servicing the debt. The Greeks, for all their problems, have been able to finance that debt under the umbrella of the EU, so the effective interest rate on the Greek debt is about 1.7 per cent to 1.9 per cent. But the debt we have in this nation is the amount borrowed by the previous government by selling government bonds and those bonds have been sold somewhere between three per cent and five per cent or, on average, at around four per cent. So as amazing as it seems, the interest repayments per person in this nation are actually 20 per cent higher than what they are in Greece.

I will give you the numbers to show you the problems we have. The interest repayments on Greek debt are the equivalent of a crippling A$736 per Greek citizen. But in Australia, if we
add our Commonwealth debt to the debt that our state governments have also incurred and we look at the interest obligation per Australian citizen, every year that is running at close to $900. So the interest repayments on Greek debt for every Greek citizen is $736; in Australia it is $900. We have a 20 per cent higher cost of servicing our debt than does Greece—to try and put some context around the mess and difficulties that we are in.

The debt and deficit deniers simply say, 'We can keep on spending, and this debt and interest repayments should be paid for by business—therefore the average citizen can avoid it. But what happens when you raise taxes on business? It is often said businesses and corporations are not people. In this respect it is very true. Because if you raise the taxes on companies, one of five things happen. Firstly, depending on competition in the market, business increase its prices, so it will be consumers that pay the increased tax through higher prices. Secondly, if you raise the tax on businesses, the only thing businesses can do is cut their wages and salaries they give to their employees, so it will be their employees paying the price. Thirdly, they may not take on new employees, so it will be the unemployed that pay the price. Fourthly, they may pay reduced dividends to their shareholders, many of whom are superannuants, so average Australian citizens will be the ones who pay the price. It is a combination of all of the above.

We need to admit the extent of the problems that we face in this nation. We need to ask the question, 'How can we get out of this mess without making the hard decisions?' We hear the opposition leader saying 'go for growth'. The problem is they are opposed to everything that creates growth in this country. They are opposed to everything that increases our productivity and that is why this bill is important. It gets back the focus on relationships under the Fair Work Act and it puts a focus on increasing the productivity of the nation. Because, at the end of the day, the only way we can dig ourselves out of this hole, the only way that we can ensure that our kids and our grandkids enjoy the prosperity that we have enjoyed is by lifting the productivity of this nation and that is what this bill addresses. I thoroughly commend the bill to the House.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (13:22): I rise to close the debate on the Fair Work Amendment (Bargaining Processes) Bill 2014. I would like to thank all the members for their contributions to this debate. The Fair Work Amendment (Bargaining Processes) Bill 2014 implements the government's commitment to sensible, harmonious and productive bargaining. The changes were clearly stated in the coalition's policy to improve the Fair Work laws and will help to restore the balance of the workplace relations system back to the sensible centre.

A key measure of the bill is to ensure that productivity is put back on the enterprise bargaining agenda. Contrary to claims from some of those opposite, improving productivity does not necessarily mean working harder; it can mean working smarter and more effectively. This bill includes a new common-sense requirement. The Fair Work Commission must be satisfied that productivity improvements were discussed in the course of bargaining before an enterprise agreement can be approved. The measure will make sure productivity is actively considered by employers and employees during negotiations for a new enterprise agreement.

This bill does not detract from the good faith bargaining requirements in the act. The requirement to discuss productivity will be subject to the good faith bargaining provisions in
the same way that all bargaining discussions are subject to the good faith process requirements.

I reject claims by members opposite during this debate that this new requirement will increase red tape and uncertainty. A requirement to discuss productivity is not onerous. The Fair Work Commission already requires employers to fill out statutory declarations for enterprise agreement approvals so the commission can be satisfied that the constant and numerous requirements in the act are met. To suggest that providing confirmation that productivity was discussed is somehow going to hamper the process is clearly absurd.

Those opposite have also suggested the Fair Work Commission needs a legislated definition of productivity in order to enforce the new requirement. The term 'productivity' already features heavily in the objects of the Fair Work Act, without a legislative definition. So how could it sensibly be said that the organisation which oversees the act would not be able to determine if a measure raised during bargaining would impact productivity? Further data from the Department of Employment indicates that around 48 per cent of enterprise agreements approved between 1 January 2010 and 30 June 2014 contain clauses on commitments to improved productivity. Not only does this demonstrate that the Fair Work Commission is routinely assessing and approving agreements with productivity clauses; it also shows that this amendment will complement what many parties clearly already do.

It has been suggested that an employer might refuse to discuss productivity in order to stall negotiations. This argument is nothing but a red herring. In the event that this unlikely scenario did arise, the other bargaining parties can simply seek a bargaining order to require the employer to bargain in good faith. In this way the productivity discussion is no different to other bargaining discussions under the act.

The Fair Work Act currently provides that industrial action can occur before genuine and meaningful talks for enterprise agreements have taken place. The government's firm view is that protected industrial action should always be considered a last resort; not the first step in bargaining, as the current provisions allow.

The bill will clarify the 'genuinely trying to reach an agreement test' which is a test that must be satisfied before a protected action ballot can occur. By providing more guidance on how this test is to be satisfied, it makes this requirement more transparent. This will create greater certainty for all parties. Contrary to the claims of the shadow minister, it does not limit the discretion of the Fair Work Commission. It is a non-exhaustive list and it is clearly stated the commission must have regard to all relevant circumstances, not just those on the list.

These amendments will ensure a protected industrial action can only be taken where there have been genuine and meaningful discussions between the parties or where the applicant for the industrial action ballot order has made reasonable efforts in meaningful discussions with the employer.

I call on all members to support the passage of this bill and I again thank all members who participated in the debate.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.
Consideration in Detail

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (13:26): I have a question for the minister during the second reading detail stage. In the second reading speech, the minister said: 'For example, we have recently seen reports of protected action ballot orders made and protected industrial action threatened if pursuit of claims would increase the salary package of marine engineers in Port Hedland by around 38 per cent over four years'. It is my understanding that, since then, the minister's attention has been drawn to the fact that that claim is incorrect. Any claims that were made in those reports were wrong. There was never a claim made for 38 per cent over four years. Does the minister accept that the underlying facts referred to in his second reading speech are wrong and will he correct the record?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (13:28): No, I do not.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (13:28): I have one follow-up matter, then I will leave it at that. Did the minister take any steps, before coming and giving this speech to the parliament, to establish the truth of the claims made in the reports that he referred to?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (13:28): I am confident that at all times the relevant facts have been adduced to the House.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (13:29): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Queensland State Election

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (13:29): A very special thing happened the Saturday before last in my community and right around my home state of Queensland. In my own area it was best captured by the headline from The Logan Reporter 'Labor wins back Logan'. It was a very proud day for our community. It was a spectacular outcome that saw swings in favour of Labor of between 13 and 22 per cent in the six state seats represented within the Rankin electorate that cover the northern end of Logan City and some of the southern suburbs of Brisbane.

I am really looking forward to working with six tremendous, community minded people: Mick de Brenni in Springwood, Duncan Pegg in Stretton, Leeanne Enoch in Algester, Linus Power in Logan, Cameron Dick in Woodridge and Shannon Fentiman in Waterford. I want to congratulate Annastacia Palaszczuk and her team for the tremendous effort they put in and Anthony Chisholm and all the team in the party office for their campaign and strategy. I want to thank branch members and supporters for all of the work they did. Most of all, I want to thank the people who make up my community for standing up and speaking as one, for sending a message that the arrogance, division and unfairness that characterise both the
former Newman government in Queensland and the current Abbott government nationally are not the way forward for my community, for my state of Queensland or for this nation.

**Fuel Prices**

Mr HOGAN (Page) (13:31): As most people would be aware, oil prices have fallen drastically over the last six months or so. We have seen the price of crude oil fall to below $50 a barrel, which obviously has meant across the country that petrol prices have fallen. I think petrol prices peaked in my community at around $1.50 a litre and they have fallen to around $1.20 today, which is saving the average motorist around $20 a week. This is obviously great news; however, I was concerned, as were many people in rural communities, that the price of petrol in regional communities was falling much slower than it was in the city.

I wrote to the Chairman of the ACCC on 8 January airing this issue. I asked if he could look into it and act if there was collusion happening. He wrote back in early February to confirm that they are monitoring petrol prices on the North Coast. I do have good news. The differential between city prices and regional communities has narrowed and in some cases now they are on par. I want to alert you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and my community that I will be keeping a close watch on this to make sure that regional communities are paying very similar prices for petrol to their city cousins.

**Irish World Cup Cricket Team**

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:32): Last week our community was very proud to welcome the Irish cricket team to Randwick to play a friendly 50-overs match against the mighty Randwick Petersham Cricket Club at Coogee Oval. The Irish cricket team has based itself at Coogee in the lead-up to the World Cup. At a reception at the Randwick Town Hall last week some members of the Irish cricket team expressed to me how they felt at home in Coogee. They could not believe the number of Irish accents they had encountered walking up and down Coogee Bay Road and Arden Street. It was a great indicator of the fraternal relations that exist between Ireland and the eastern suburbs of Sydney.

The game was a hard fought contest. It was in a 50-overs format. I am pleased to report to the House that Randwick Petersham reached the visitors’ total of 255 with five wickets and seven overs to spare. Nonetheless, it was a great performance. A great day was had by all. I was particularly pleased that the Irish Ambassador, Noel White, and the Irish Consul General, Jane Connolly, were there. They unveiled a plaque along with Mike Whitney, the President of the Randwick Petersham Cricket Club. Congratulations must go to the Irish cricket team, to Randwick City Council and in particular to those at the Randwick Petersham Cricket Club who put a lot of work into this, in particular my good mate Mike Whitney.

**Australia Day**

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (13:34): Australia Day is our time to meet friends and family and share the joy of living in this great country. In Gilmore neighbourhood parks were quiet and still yet on any grassy area near water—a river, creek, dam or beach—was a gathering of Aussies enjoying the day. Three local residents had even more to celebrate. They were awarded the Order of Australia medal. It is an honour to share some of their stories to recognise their achievements.
Lyn Rolfe OAM has been an amazing advocate for decades. She is a co-founder of the Nowra Sub-branch of Partners of Veterans Association of Australia. At functions she hands out individually handmade gifts. She is a shining light. Harry Gooden OAM is a servant of the community on so many different levels it will be impossible to cover them all. The contribution he has made to Australia is truly invaluable, often liaising with local and state governments for the community. Robert Carroll OAM contributes to Australia for effective social improvement. Some of his work and voluntary engagement includes working as a psychology officer at the state Army cadet brigade, an Army reservist, a drug and alcohol counsellor and a volunteer for the RFS Illawarra communications brigade, among many other community activities.

It is truly inspirational to see these people dedicate so much of their life not only to our local organisations but to the wider Australian community. Their achievements and service encourage and inspire others to volunteer and become part of this action to assist our community overall. Well done to all those honoured on Australia Day 2015.

Country Basketball League

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:35): All around this wonderful country of ours sport brings people and families together, especially so in Wodonga. I was fortunate to be part of a wonderful night of sport on Saturday at the Wodonga Sports & Leisure Centre. The Wodonga Wolves played off in the women's and men's north-east country basketball league grand finals. What an exciting few hours they were. The stadium was packed with supporters getting right behind both games. The atmosphere was electric.

The Lady Wolves gave it their all throughout the match. They fought to the bitter end and should be proud of their efforts. Unfortunately, the Shepparton Lady Gators were too good, winning by nine points. Special mention goes to coaches Phil Brown and Craig McClanahan and manager Vicki Northey.

In the men's game the match went down to the wire. The thrilling conclusion saw the Wolves get up by two points over the Seymour Blasters after 17-year-old Trent McMullen took the game on and showed great composure to shoot the winning shots. Special acknowledgement goes to coaches Troy Crawford and David de Koeyer and manager Greg Sharp.

It is volunteers who are the backbone of these events. They did a terrific job on Saturday night. Special thanks go to Trevor White for making me so welcome. Thank you, team.

Fuel Prices

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (13:37): I rise on behalf of Central Coast motorists seeking fuel price equity. For too long the Central Coast has experienced higher fuel prices than Sydney, Western Sydney and other regions throughout New South Wales. Central Coast motorists are fed up with paying higher petrol prices and many have joined my fight for fair fuel pricing by supporting my petition and requests to the ACCC to conduct an investigation into fuel prices on the Central Coast.

In December and January I wrote to the chairman of the ACCC calling for the Central Coast to be included in their investigation into fuel pricing. At the time I launched the Dobell fuel petition, a motorist on the Central Coast filling a 50 litre tank of fuel was paying almost $10 more than a motorist on the South Coast. On that day, per tanker, the Central Coast was...
gouged an additional $8,708. A week before Christmas this amount was $13,000. Central Coast prices are currently relatively low but, given the volatility of fuel pricing, it is only matter of time before the gap widens again. Central Coast motorist have had enough and we want certainty with fuel prices. Our community is heavily dependent on cars, with approximately 20,000 motorists commuting daily from the region. Coupled with limited access to public transport, the fight for fuel price equality is more important than ever. I call on the ACCC to listen to the concerns of the Central Coast motorists and explain this market disparity.

**Fuel Prices**  
**Ms CHESTERS** (Bendigo) (13:38): I too am concerned about petrol prices and the fact that in the bush, in regions like my own electorate of Bendigo, the petrol prices are not going down as quickly as they are in the city areas. On one particular day, the *Bendigo Advertiser* ran a report quoting that the price in the Prime Minister's electorate, in the heart of Sydney, was 99 cents. In my own electorate on that day it was $1.20. There is a difference between prices in the city and the country when it comes to petrol. But there is something that this government can do right now to help people in the bush. I call on the government, and all those people who have already spoken in this 90-second statement debate, to reduce the petrol tax.

This government increased the petrol tax. This government increased what people in the bush and in the city pay to this government in petrol tax. There is something really simple that the people opposite can do when it comes to petrol prices, and that is to stop increasing the fuel excise—what they take out of motorists' pockets. It is great to see them get up and campaign the ACCC. Why don't they campaign their own ministers on this issue and change what they did in the budget to people living in the country. Petrol prices are higher in the country; meaning we pay more in tax to this government through the petrol increases. If this government wants to do something for the bush then they should change their position on fuel excise.

**Remote School Attendance Strategy**  
**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey) (13:40): Last week, I had the opportunity to join the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion, on a run through the APY Lands in the north of my electorate. We had a number of meetings while we were up there, including with the chairman of the APY council. There are a number of issues surrounding that body at the moment that the state government needs to deal with. In particular, we were there to see 12 months on just how the school attendance program was working. We went to two communities, one right in the corner of South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia called Pitjantjara. Pitjantjara has 57 students. On the day we were there 51 were in attendance. The school attendance officers got out early. They go round the town and they blow on the horn of the bus and, if you do not come out then, at the next visit they will knock on your door and if the children do not come out after that they will go in.

Fifty-one out of 57 is pretty good and a very good tick for the program, especially considering that the six children that were not there were not in community. Three were off partaking in cultural practices and the other three belonged to families that had not yet returned to community from wherever they had chosen to go for the summer. We had a similar experience in Indulkana. Pretty much, we are getting 100 per cent of the students that
are in community to attend on the day. The program is a success. We need to attack the other side of the equation now.

**Greste, Mr Peter**

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (13:41): I rise to express my relief at the release of Australian Al Jazeera journalist, Peter Greste, from Egypt's Tora prison after 400 days of enduring arrest, imprisonment and trial based on false charges, zero evidence and unfair processes. It has been inspirational to watch the Greste family, Peter's parents Lois and Juris, and his brothers Michael and Andrew, campaigning with dignity and tenacity to see Peter freed and their incredible joy at the reunion with Peter on Australian soil.

I thank the global media community, Amnesty International and the many people in this place and in Australia and beyond who have campaigned on the issue of freedom for the Al Jazeera journalists. It is a testament to Peter's character that he wishes to return to journalism and that he will continue to campaign for the release of his Al Jazeera colleagues Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed with whom he was imprisoned for 400 days and who are family to him now; as well as for the acquittals of colleagues convicted in absentia who must live with this injustice hanging over the heads.

I also wish to pay tribute to Kenji Goto, the Japanese journalist and humanitarian, who was brutally killed by IS. More than ever, journalism is coming under attack. Unfortunately, such attacks are not only coming from terrorists and undemocratic governments. This parliament has recently passed national security laws that would see journalists jailed for up to 10 years for publishing details of a security intelligence operation and the government's proposed data retention bill would severely compromise journalists and their sources. It is vital that our statement that 'journalism is not a crime' is matched by our actions and laws.

**Barton Electorate: Chinese New Year**

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (13:43): This year, 2015, is the new year of the green or wooden sheep in the Chinese zodiac—a symbol of empathy, tranquillity and peacefulness, coupled with a strong sense of justice and stability. Spiritually, Chinese New Year is also associated with the renewal of life, the chance of a revival and righting any wrongs. The celebration of Chinese New Year is to wish for wellness, good health, wealth and longevity. The idea of starting things afresh involves a ritual of cleaning one's home to sweep away negativity and misfortune, and uniting with family and friends for dinner to turn over a new leaf.

The celebration of the lunar calendar is prominent in Chinese populations all over the world, particularly those who hail from mainland China, Hong Kong and Southern China—some of Australia's first Chinese migrants. As the member for Barton, Chinese culture and civilisation makes up a significant portion of my electorate. I am very proud of the fact that I have enjoyed a longstanding friendship with the Chinese community that manifested in my role as mayor and councillor for Kogarah City Council. I am further privileged to be able to represent the Chinese community in Barton in a federal capacity.

As Australia becomes increasingly multicultural, it is not uncommon to see major shopping centres, supermarkets and local businesses hanging up Chinese celebrations and greetings. The ethos, values and camaraderie of the Chinese community certainly enrich our society and
contribute to furthering our nation for the better. I wish the Chinese community a happy and healthy year of the sheep.

**Muddiman, Ms Susi, OAM**

*Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (13:44):* I rise to congratulate Tweed Regional Gallery Director Susi Muddiman, who has been honoured with an Order of Australia Medal as part of the Australia Day 2015 honours list. Susi received the OAM for service to the museums and galleries sector in regional New South Wales. This honour caps off a remarkable achievement for Susi, recognising the great work that she did particularly in establishing the Margaret Olley Arts Centre at Murwillumbah, which opened last year.

Susi Muddiman's career spans 26 years, including roles as gallery director in Grafton and Wagga Wagga. The past three years has earned her a place on a celebrated list of the 50 most powerful people in Australian art—another great achievement. However, Susi Muddiman's prominence rose significantly with the creation of the Margaret Olley centre. This $4.12 million project is a unique and precise recreation of the home and studio of the late iconic artist Margaret Olley. The previous federal Labor government delivered $1 million towards this remarkable project, which has record numbers of visitors coming to Murwillumbah for our fantastic Tweed regional gallery.

But this really is a remarkable achievement of Susi and a recognition of the wonderful work that she does within the gallery. In fact, Susi's infectious energy and enthusiasm is an inspiration to all of us. The President of the Friends of the Tweed Regional Gallery said the group extended their 'warmest congratulations to Susi for this wonderful recognition'. Susi does truly engage with and care about every level of the gallery. Congratulations, Susi.

**Solomon Electorate: Education**

*Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (13:46):* I rise today to speak about an initiative that I started in my electorate to help educational outcomes. For many parents and students the beginning of the school year can be an anxious time as children think about the challenges of fitting in with a new group of friends or meeting their academic challenges and their families face the considerable hurdle of equipping students for their year ahead. New uniforms, stationery, books and tuition fees add up, and for too many parents this represents a considerable financial burden.

Teachers and principals in my electorate tell me that children without proper school supplies have lower attendance rates and are more likely to do poorly, leading to higher drop out rates than other students. So, to give students a good start to their education and help ease the financial burden for many in my electorate, I put in place a program to provide a back-to-school-free pack for families across the electorate. Each pack contained essential stationery and basic supplies to give children access to the tools that they need to learn and succeed. I had a stall at the Casuarina shopping centre and was delighted by the response. It was a real great delight that the schools supported this initiative, and next year we think it will be bigger and better. The people of Solomon really did appreciate the fact that they were able to get free back-to-school supplies to help their children in my electorate.
Thompson, Mr Neil

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (13:47): Today I want to acknowledge the passing of my friend Neil Thompson. Neil, sadly, passed away after a strong fight against cancer at the young age of 45.

His passion and dedication to restoring our old Fords is second to none. I first met Neil back in the mid-1990s and watched him build his business into Australia's premier GT performance restoration business. To those who are involved with Fords and GTs, Neil's name is synonymous with GT Falcons. Whenever I had the opportunity to visit his shop, GT Ford Performance, Neil always took the time to show me around and let me see what rare and special machines he was working on or restoring. His advice was always well received and his knowledge on all things GT was astounding. Many of us owe a great deal to Neil for his passion, help and advice. He certainly drove the GT restoration industry to a new level and did a lot to make our cars what they are today. Whether in the shop or on his program, Restoring Dreams, Neil always wanted to help people learn more about their cars.

I am sorry I will not be able to join the many hundreds of people at Neil's service today, but I want his family to know just how much he will be missed. To his sons, Jordie and Jake: thanks for sharing your dad with us. I know how painful it is to lose your dad, but I can tell you he was exceptionally proud of both of you, and I hope you always remember your dad was a wonderful man and will be proud of him. Goodbye, Neil, and rest in peace.

Bory, Ms Eva

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (13:49): I rise today to express my deep regret for the loss of Olympian and long-time campaigner for teaching kids to swim, Eva Bory, who passed away in Arizona aged 77. For many who grew up in the seventies, Eva and Alex Bory were well-known identities. They were often seen swimming coaching at Marylands, Bondi Baths and at swimming centres in North Rocks, Toongabbie and Emu Heights. Eva specialised in stroke-teaching techniques with youngsters, from teaching herself to swim in a lake to ultimately holding the 1955 world record for the 100-metre backstroke.

Nineteen-year-old Eva came to Australia in 1956 as part of the Hungarian Olympic squad, where she helped break the world record for the 4x100-metre medley. After the games she sought and was granted political asylum. In 1961, with Forbes Carlisle she produced the Carlisle swimming program and methods, a cornerstone of competitive swimming still in use today. She went on to write Teach Yourself to Swim, published throughout the English-speaking world.

Many within the electorate of Lindsay have fond memories. Ian Ahern writes, 'Eva was my swimming coach at the Emu Plains centre'. Carly Eekman: 'My five kids attended the Emu Plains centre named after you. They were true water babies.' And Louise O'Neill could remember Eva handing out jelly beans. (Time expired)

Abbott Government

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:50): At the end of last year the Prime Minister said he was putting a ragged 2014 behind him, with the focus this year to be on families, jobs and infrastructure. Well, the focus could not be further away from families, jobs or infrastructure today, the first sitting day of the year. The chaos and dysfunction of the Abbott government
continues. That was evident this morning when almost 40 per cent of the Prime Minister's colleagues voted to spill his position.

Over the summer break I spent a lot of time catching up with friends across all sides of politics to hear their views on the state of the government, and I learnt that many, including friends of friends who are self-confessed North Shore conservatives, are not listening. They have simply tuned out.

Australians are sick and tired of the Abbott government's unfair policies, its attacks on universal health care, its attacks on access to university for anyone no matter where they live or how much their parents earn, its attacks on pensions and its attacks on ADF pay. These unfair policies cut into our social fabric. They cut into the grain of what it is to be an Australian, and the Australian people are not happy. As we start the parliamentary year for 2015, I want to pledge that these are the things I will be fighting for this year. The people of Canberra, and more widely the people of Australia, can count on me to defend a fair go for all. (Time expired)

**Bass Electorate: Festivale**

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:52): Just when you thought the tourism offerings in Northern Tasmania could not get any better, I am thrilled to stand up and alert you to Festivale, one of our longest-running food and wine events. Festivale celebrates the best of Tasmania's produce, cool-climate wines, beer, ciders and whiskey from 13 to 15 February in Launceston's picturesque City Park. More than 35,000 people will enjoy the best Tasmanian offerings at more than 70 stalls. And the weather forecasters tell us it will be a perfect 25, 27 and 31 degrees over the three days of Festivale.

You can taste the best cheeses, premium meats, salmon and other seafood, luscious fruits and gourmet desserts—all exquisite Tasmanian produce. The wineries include Josef Chromy Wines, which make the world's best chardonnay; Ghost Rock Vineyard; Jansz Wines; Moore's Hill Estate; and Tamar Ridge. Master classes will be held by people like award-winning chef and TV presenter Peter Kuruvita. James Welsh, a sommelier from Stillwater and Black Cow restaurants, will be one of Festivale's wine experts.

The outdoor theatre will feature non-stop entertainment. Mental As Anything will headline Friday night, the Eurogliders will bring Saturday night alive, while Grace Knight gets jazzy on Sunday. Former Powderfinger guitarist Darren Middleton will also play on Saturday. And my Lions Club will be manning the gates at City Park. So, what are you waiting for? Don't miss Festivale in Launceston from 13 to 15 February.

**Parramatta Electorate: Holroyd Community Aid**

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (13:54): Holroyd Community Aid has been out working in the local Merrylands community for almost 50 years. They are well respected and well known for their work. Recently they lost their funding thanks to the Abbott government's cruel cuts to the Social Services Discretionary Grants Program. Notice that the cuts reached the inboxes of community organisations just before Christmas, and for Holroyd Community Aid on 24 December, after they had already closed for the break. Narelle Morris, the manager of Holroyd Community Aid, has told me of her shock when she returned from her Christmas break to find out that they will have to close up shop as early as March. The Emergency Relief Grants allowed Holroyd Community Aid to provide essential relief services, including
food and electricity vouchers and money for medication, clothes and nappies, to local families who are struggling. They have helped upwards of one million people since they opened, helping people out in the short term and helping them to get back on their feet.

Opening up the grants program to a competitive tender meant that the department was overwhelmed with 5½ thousand applications. It was a confusing process in which smaller local organisations were unable to compete with national and state-based organisations. It was a process that favoured the big over the small. With these cruel cuts, Holroyd Community Aid and several other organisations in my local community will be forced to close as early as March. It demonstrates once again the government's lack of understanding of the needs of the community and the valuable contribution that small organisations make.

Hughes Electorate: Chinese New Year

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:55): In the lead-up to the Chinese new year, last weekend I was proud to host another successful community event to welcome in the Year of the Sheep. Building on last year's event, my electorate's celebration of this year's 2015 lunar new year was held at Holsworthy High School. It was pleasing to see our local Chinese community embrace the event, along with many hundreds of locals from the surrounding areas. The event kicked off with the traditional lion dance, which caught everyone's attention. And, not surprisingly, many lined up to take a photo with a lucky lion.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers who helped make the event such a success. Particular thanks go to iron chef Bob Wu, who again was a crowd favourite with his cooking demonstration. This year Iron Chef Wu taught a willing audience how to make Chinese dumplings, and there was no shortage of people ready to taste the finished product, including myself. Thanks also go to the team from Complete Self Defence at Moorebank, who performed an outstanding exhibition of the martial art Hapkido. It was lovely to see the young children and adults demonstrate their skills and discipline under the careful guidance of their instructors, Jimmy Trinh and Adrian Low. Finally, I would like to thank Cindy Ren and her army of volunteers. I would also like to thank the businesses that supported the event, including Diamond Spring Water, Hello Holidays, Kangaroo Collection, KGAC Proprietary Limited, the Shen Yun promotional team, and The Epoch Times.

Newcastle Electorate: Wollotuka Yarning Circle

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:57): In December last year I took part in the University of Newcastle's inaugural Wollotuka Yarning Circle. The Yarning Circle is an initiative of the Wollotuka Institute and is the flagship event for the organisation's new direction in community engagement and discussion, ensuring that local Aboriginal people and the wider community have a platform to take part in the national debate on Indigenous affairs. December's Yarning Circle focused on how constitutional recognition would impact the lives and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and I was joined in this discussion with the community and fellow panellists by award-winning journalist and advocate for Indigenous rights Jeff McMullen AM and Teela Reid, a talented lawyer and University of Newcastle and Wollotuka graduate.

For more than 30 years Wollotuka has been supporting Indigenous students through their studies and has helped the University of Newcastle become a leader in Indigenous education, with the highest number of Indigenous enrolments in Australia and more than 1,100 graduates...
from the institute to date. I congratulate Professor Bob Morgan, Conjoint Professor of the Wollotuka Institute, and his team for their ongoing success and advocacy for Indigenous Australians and thank them for the opportunity to take part in the Yarning Circle discussion. I also encourage all members in this place to take part in the yarn in their communities about constitutional recognition. Opportunities to change the Constitution come along rarely and it is time we put an end to the constitutional exclusion of Aboriginal people from the national polity.

**Petrie Electorate: Boundary Road Overpass**

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (13:58): Since being elected as the federal member for Petrie in 2013 I have been advocating for an upgrade to the Boundary Road overpass at North Lakes and Narangba. This is a notorious interchange that crosses the Bruce Highway, which causes local motorists great frustration and local small businesses and freight traffic lost productivity. However, I am very pleased that last month the Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Warren Truss, announced that the Commonwealth would fund 80 per cent of the $105 million needed to complete a new six-lane overpass and associated construction. This is a great win for the people of North Lakes, Mango Hill, Deception Bay and Narangba, and I am very pleased with this result.

I want to place on record my thanks to the Deputy Prime Minister; my thanks to my colleague, the federal member for Longman; and my thanks to the previous two state members, Trevor Ruthenberg and Reg Gulley. It is essential that this upgrade is completed, and I look forward to working with the new state member for Murrumba once the new state government is sworn in to ensure that the remaining 20 per cent is funded and this project is completed.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members’ statements has concluded.

**CONDOLENCES**

Fitzgibbon, Mr Eric John

The SPEAKER (14:00): I inform the House of the death of Eric John Fitzgibbon, a former member of this House. Eric Fitzgibbon, whom I did know and work with in this House, died on 24 January 2015. He represented the division of Hunter from 1984 till 1996 and did excellent work on the Public Accounts and Audit Committee, on which I worked with him. I intend to grant indulgence to his son the current member for Hunter, and he has the call.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (14:00): I thank you, Madam Speaker, and I will be very brief, but I just want to very quickly thank the House for its acknowledgement of my father's service both in this place and to his electorate. I also, on behalf of the family, thank the very, very many on both sides of this chamber and the other place who have extended their sympathies and support over the course of the last couple of weeks.

My father made many friends here, and many of those friends have remained in touch. I know he appreciated that very much. I reminded the many who attended his farewell that at one election my father's campaign slogan was: 'Eric Fitzgibbon—he's one of us.' It is the most successful campaign slogan I have seen used in my many years of campaigning—not that it
was original; it had been used before with lesser effect. But somehow, alongside my father's name, it seemed to magically capture just who he was and what he stood for.

It also sent the right message, from his perspective, to those he sought to represent: that is, that his working class background caused him to understand fully the challenges of those who are battling in life and that he wanted to extend to them, as their representative, a hand-up—not a handout but a hand-up. There can be no doubt that my father's happy but struggling working class background affected his political thought. It certainly is what drew him to politics, and more importantly it drew him to the Australian Labor Party, a party he loved very much, a party that stood for what he believed were the important things in life.

He spent his 12 years here entirely without ambition. His only objective was to diligently, energetically and in a dedicated way represent the people of the Hunter electorate. On that basis, he is remembered very, very fondly, and that is a great comfort to us. He will always be remembered as Eric Fitzgibbon, one of us. We will miss him dearly. His passing is very sad, but he is in a better place and is at peace. I thank the House.

**The SPEAKER:** As a mark of respect for his memory, I ask honourable members to stand in their places.

*Honourable members having stood in their places—*

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the House.

**Uren, Hon. Thomas, AC**

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:04): I move:

That the House record its deep regret at the death on 26 January 2015 of the Honourable Thomas Uren AC, a former Minister and Member of this House for the Division of Reid from 1958 to 1990, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Tom Uren was a prisoner of war, a member of this parliament, a minister and a deputy leader of his party. Tom was born in Balmain, but then his family moved to Harbord, on the Northern Beaches, when he was at the age of five. He attended Manly Boys' Intermediate High School, he was a surf lifesaving champion at Freshwater and he played for Manly-Warringah in the Presidents Cup Rugby League competition. While it is true to say that Tom Uren grew up in my own electorate, I suspect his heart was always in Balmain.

He was an aspiring boxer, he was an outstanding athlete and he joined the Army at the age of 20 and subsequently deployed to Timor. He spent his 21st birthday, and the following three birthdays, as a prisoner of war of the Japanese. He lived through the brutality of the Burma-Thai railway, through daily extremes of suffering and privation, but he took from that experience the principle of Weary Dunlop: the fit looking after the sick, the young looking after the old and the rich looking after the poor. On one occasion while he was a prisoner of war, a Japanese guard was about to throw a prisoner from a bridge. Tom Uren risked the rage of the guards and their rifle butts. He confronted the guard and saved his comrade's life. After being transferred to Japan, he saw from a distance the sky turn crimson with the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

Despite experiencing humanity at its worst, Tom Uren rejected hatred because, he said, hatred scars the soul. In word and in deed, he was anti-war. It was not a belief he developed in a coffee shop or in a lecture theatre; it was a belief he came to because of his own bitter
experience. It was a sincere, passionate and lifelong belief. I first met Tom Uren at a Palm Sunday peace march in the mid-1980s. Once, as a minister, he was addressing an audience at Sydney university; he intervened to break up a fight between two students. The former boxer said: 'The only thing I fight for now is peace.'

He served our country all his days. In 1958 he entered federal parliament as the member for Reid and represented the electorate for 31 years, leaving as Father of the House. He became Minister for Urban and Regional Development in the Whitlam government and pioneered the protection of Australia's historic and natural heritage. He also served as a minister in the first two Hawke governments. When he retired, he was the Father of the House and he remained, long into his retirement, an active conservationist. He was indeed a strong supporter of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and, in the lead-up to the formation of that trust under the Howard government, I joined him at some protest rallies in my electorate which he had come back to, at least to visit—against the policies of the government which he had earlier served, at least in that respect.

Tom Uren once reflected: 'I am a much gentler man than most people believe. There are two sides to me. I've got a gentler side and a harder side and as I've got older I've got much gentler.' This, of course, was his way of saying that he cared about and felt for people, but nevertheless he always fought for principle. He was a warrior in this House; but above all else, in war and in peace, he was a warrior for a better Australia. In his life and through his actions we saw valour, sacrifice, service to country and a love of others over self.

It is right that his party has extensively honoured him, but Tom Uren will always be remembered as more than simply a son of his party. He will be remembered as a great son of Australia. On behalf of everyone on this side of the House—and I am sure on behalf of all Australians—I extend to his widow, Christine, and to his family the deepest condolences of the government and of the Australian people.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): As a soldier and a prisoner of war Tom Uren saw the worst of war—the personal nightmare of the prison camps and the stained skies over Nagasaki—and he fought to build the best of civilisation after that war as a champion for peace, as a warrior for the working class and as a minister.

A working-class boy from Balmain who grew into a talented sportsmen and a gifted boxer, Tom spent his 20th birthday in his country's uniform and his 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th as a prisoner of the Japanese. None of us can truly imagine the hardship and the cruelty that the brave men of the Burma Railway knew but, like so many of his Australian comrades in camp, Tom never lost faith in his fellow man. In fact, the horror of those years only fed his faith in collectivism and in our enduring human duty to be our brother's keeper. When Tom looked at the British prisoners—the officers taking first choice of the food and accommodation—he saw the law of the jungle. Yet in the Australian camp, as Tom would often say—including in his maiden speech in the old chamber down the hill—the fit looked after the sick, the young looked after the old and the rich looked after the poor. For him that was the difference, and it was this noble philosophy that guided his political life.

As a minister in both the Whitlam and the Hawke governments Tom's great passion was for our national estate, reimagining and reconfiguring our inner cities and revitalising our regional centres. As Tom told the parliament, his guiding mission was to create and preserve
things and places of great beauty for all Australians and for the Australians who follow us. His success, his legacy, lives around us.

Above and through all this, Tom was the keeper of Labor’s conscience in often trying times. He was a moral centre. Tom was a fearless foe and a loyal friend. Many of my colleagues—the member for Grayndler in particular, but many of them—knew and loved Tom and will have their own personal tributes and stories to share. For me, the last words belong to Tom Uren from the final page of his memoir, Straight Left:

In my years of living, giving and serving our human family is the most rewarding achievement. When you walk down the street, the beauty of people’s eyes and faces give you so many rewards …

Our condolences to his family, his friends and his loved ones. May he rest in peace.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (14:12): I join with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in supporting this condolence motion for my friend and comrade Tom Uren. Tom Uren saw deprivation in his early years, and then the worst of humanity. Born into the Depression in 1921, he left school at the age of 13 because his father could not get employment. He was a great sportsman. He represented Manly, unfortunately, in rugby league, but he also fought for the Australian heavyweight boxing championship. He was also a surf lifesaving champion at Freshwater. He had a lot to look forward to; and then, of course, World War II intervened. He put his nation before himself and, like so many other young men and women of that time, he enlisted. He went to Timor and was captured. He served in Timor, in Singapore, on the Burma-Siam railway and in Japan as a prisoner of war of the Japanese.

Those people who read Richard Flanagan’s extraordinary book would respond to it as I did: you just wonder how these men came through that process without being bitter about the world and their place in it.

He was an extraordinary man. If he can be characterised by anything it is by his faith in humanity and his fellow man. He came through that process with love and used to speak—unusually for a man—about his love for people. It was genuine, and he received love in spades in return.

He was, in my view, the most significant grassroots campaigner in the history of the Australian Labor Party, given the longevity that the issues, be it the anti-Vietnam war moratoriums, which he and Jim Cairns led, his role on the environment—well ahead of the pack; well ahead of the intelligentsia—he understood a love for our natural and our built environment or whether it be issues of justice for our veterans. He was very proud that his last victory was to convince Prime Minister Gillard to grant justice to the surviving former prisoners of war of the Japanese. That occurred in 2012.

He leaves a tremendous legacy: the greening of Western Sydney, access to sewerage for people in our outer suburban communities, the first significant investment in public transport by a national government, the Australian Heritage Commission, the Register of the National Estate and the saving of the Sydney Harbour foreshores. Wherever you look around this country, particularly in outer suburbs and our regional cities, Tom Uren leaves a legacy of which he and his family can indeed be proud as both a minister in the Whitlam government and a minister in the Hawke government.
When he was nominated for the Companion of the Order of Australia I contacted Tony Abbott, the then Leader of the Opposition, and told him—as I told Bob Brown, the leader of the Australian Greens—that Prime Minister Gillard was supporting that nomination. All three of them enthusiastically and genuinely supported that nomination. He was someone who, in the noise of politics and conflict and petty squabbles that go on, soared above the political landscape—in this building and out there in the community.

To Christine, Ruby, Michael and Heather—and all of his family—I pass my condolences to you. His state funeral was a very historical event. I think it was wonderful to see Sir John Carrick, a good comrade of Tom's as a prisoner of war. They led parallel lives of different political viewpoints but both are people, for those of us who have come after them, to whom we owe eternal respect for what they did for our nation.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:17): To many of us on this side of the parliament we cannot imagine a Labor Party without Tom Uren. My friend the member for Grayndler spoke very movingly about his great friend and mentor but, really, Tom was more like a father to the member for Grayndler than just a mentor. And so he was to many of us on this side of the parliament a great comrade, a great friend and a great mentor. Before I was the member for Sydney, before I was even the Labor candidate, he supported me in my preselection for the seat of Sydney. He was absolutely unstinting in his support of the member for Grayndler, of me and of many others on this side. He was a great inspiration, a great elder statesman and a very loving friend.

He had a great belief in the obligation of all of us to do what we can to help others. As a young, strong man in a prisoner-of-war camp Tom made sure that he always lifted the heavy end of the log as a matter of responsibility, because he could, and what his mates could not carry he would carry for them, and when they could not walk they would lean on him. Looking back, later in his life, he said that his great regret was not when those who were weaker than him needed his protection and strength, his great regret was that he felt pride at opportunity rather than humility. You understood the measure of him as a human being when he spoke about his love not just for his fellow prisoners of war but that he was able to translate that love even to his enemies, his wartime enemies.

He was left not with bitterness after the war but with an unshakable conviction of the importance of mutual support and collective action—taught to him by his great mentor and friend Weary Dunlop. He came home too with a deep dedication to the cause of peace. He saw those bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and they bred in him an unyielding revulsion of the idea of nuclear weapons.

He was also the first member of parliament to question Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, in August 1962, and was always a presence at those marches. He remained close—always, right through his life—to the government in Vietnam and travelled there many times. As the member for Grayndler said, his support was for the veterans of the war in Vietnam and Australian veterans of all wars, and he was very proud indeed of Prime Minister Gillard's agreement to provide compensation to all former prisoners of war.

Tom Uren was Minister for Urban and Regional Development in the Whitlam government, and the residents of Sydney have much to be grateful to him for: the preservation of the inner-city working-class communities, Glebe, Woolloomooloo and Millers Point, and our beautiful harbour foreshore. Tom had a vision that any Australian should be able to walk from headland
to headland, along the harbour foreshore, that it should not be just the preserve of the rich, and he did all he could to see that vision come to fruition. But it was not just the beautiful harbour foreshore that he cared about—as the chair of the Parramatta Park Trust, he was absolutely dedicated to having green, open space for the residents of Western Sydney too.

He lived a long, rich and full life and never gave up his activism within the Labor Party and his activism within our community. He had many causes and many friendships beyond the Labor Party as well. He was called an honorary Josephite by the Josephite nuns. He was a great supporter of the work of Saint Mary MacKillop. He was a great supporter of the independence of Timor-Leste and counts the leaders of the independence movement among his closest friends. He would quote to us often the words of Martin Luther King, 'Hate distorts the personality and scars the soul. It is more injurious to the hater than the hated.'

If you could define such a long and rich and varied life by one philosophy, that philosophy that Weary Dunlop instilled in him of the strong looking after the week—of each of us having a responsibility to all of us—and that philosophy of Martin Luther King—that hate distorts the hater and damages the hater more than the hated—would be his two guiding tenets. To his wife Christine, daughter Ruby, and Michael and Heather, his children with his beloved first wife, Patricia, our thoughts are with you. We have all lost a great friend and a great comrade.

The SPEAKER (14:22): I would like to add a few words of my own. Tom Uren was a great man of the Labor Party and, yet, sometimes he could reach out to the other side. And well I remember a trio of the then Mayor of Mosman, the late Barry O'Keefe, and myself and Tom Uren standing on the same stage protesting to save the angophora forest on the shores of Balmoral. Needless to say, we won. As a mark of respect I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:24): I associate myself with the remarks that have been made about the Honourable Tom Uren, particularly in light of the very fond relationship I know that the member for Grayndler had with Tom Uren over a lifetime. In doing so, I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Question agreed to.

Enderby, Hon. Keppel Earl, QC

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:24): I move:

That the House record its deep regret at the death on 7 January 2015 of the Honourable Keppel Earl Enderby, QC, former Attorney-General in the Whitlam government and Member for the Australian Capital Territory and Canberra, and place on record its appreciation of his service in this parliament, and tender its profound sympathy to his family.

Much is made of the generation of Whitlam government ministers and the fact that they experienced years, if not decades, of frustration in the wilderness of opposition before entering government in 1972. But Kep Enderby was not one of them. Kep Enderby entered the parliament as the member for the Australian Capital Territory in June 1970, having had a successful and a fulfilling career in the law. Just 2½ years later he became a minister in the
Whitlam government. He held various ministries and, for nine months was Attorney-General in the Whitlam government, serving until the dismissal in 1975. He was, as the member for the Australian Capital Territory and then the member for Canberra, as you would expect, a passionate advocate for the national capital. In his maiden speech he decried the inequality of residents of the ACT and those of the Northern Territory, because ACT residents had no representation in those days in the Senate. He fought for that representation throughout his time in the parliament.

Kep Enderby introduced the Family Law Act, giving Australians no-fault divorce and setting up the Family Court. He also appreciated the challenges that Indigenous Australians faced during those times. When Senator Neville Bonner was told in a country pub in Victoria that he would not be served, Kep Enderby threatened prosecution. As Minister for the Capital Territory he was instrumental in the decriminalisation of homosexuality. As the minister for the territory he had a unique interest in that he was the member for Canberra and a local resident, as well as the minister. That, of course, was all to change in October 1973, when Gough Whitlam, the Prime Minister, called him to say that he would be moved to a new portfolio as part of a reshuffle the next day. Knowing that he had hours left in his treasured portfolio, apparently the minister and his staff worked through the night renaming 50 Canberra street names after left-wing poets, philosophers and revolutionary leaders from around the world. Luckily, his time in the parliament was short. He lost his seat in the 1975 landslide. Some said that he returned to the law after politics, but, in many respects, he never really left the law. In 1982 he was appointed a New South Wales Supreme Court judge. He served on the bench until 1992 and, from 1997 to 2000, he chaired the Serious Offenders Review Council.

He had a full life before serving in this parliament. He was in the Royal Australian Air Force during the last year of the Second World War. He worked as a postman and studied law at Sydney University and did his master's at the London School of Economics. He won the New South Wales amateur golf championship in 1946 and the following year came third in the Australian Open. In 1951 he entered the British Open and came second in the amateur competition. He was a man of parts. He was a man of many talents. One of his passions was the Esperanto movement. He believed that if the world had one language it would lessen conflict. He was in fact president of the universal Esperanto movement during the late 1990s.

I will not try to say anything in Esperanto. I have enough trouble with English, let alone Esperanto! But I certainly do extend the coalition's sympathy and the sympathy of this parliament to his wife of 50 years, Dot, and to his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:29): Kep Enderby had a mighty intellect and a great Labor heart. He was a humanitarian for all seasons. Born and educated in Dubbo, where his parents owned the local milk bar, he joined the RAAF in 1944 as a trainee pilot. He then went on to study law in London. An outstanding golfer, as we have heard, he competed in the 1951 British Open as an amateur, but he chose instead a career in the law over a life on the links. Kep came to Canberra as a lecturer at the Australian National University. He was quickly drawn to politics and elected as the member for the ACT in 1970. His political career was brief, but memorable. Enderby's first federal campaign was 'It's Time', and his last came amongst the acrimony and the recriminations of the Dismissal.
In February 1975 Enderby succeeded Lionel Murphy as Attorney-General after Murphy had been made a High Court judge and Kep had done some less than subtle lobbying of his Prime Minister. But despite the less than inauspicious beginning, and a Senate that was turbulent on its best day while openly hostile on the rest, Kep Enderby delivered nation-changing reforms as Attorney-General, reforms that stand the test of time and have changed the lives of thousands of Australians. No-fault divorce, the Racial Discrimination Act, decriminalising abortion in the Commonwealth territories: he swept away discriminatory laws from Canberra to Darwin, laws that laid the foundations for the modern, confident, progressive and tolerant Australia that we all are.

Kep Enderby lost his seat in the landslide of 1975, but he spent the next 40 years as a servant and an advocate of justice. For a decade he adjudicated with honour on the bench of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. In retirement he remained a tireless champion of civil liberties, peace and respect for universal humanity. He even learnt the world language, Esperanto, in the hope that breaking down language barriers would help a shared understanding. To the very end, Kep Enderby was a powerful voice for many progressive causes, from the rights of prisoners through to the debate on euthanasia. Today we honour his life, his enduring faith in doing the right thing. We draw inspiration from his courage, from his conviction and from his truth and we offer our heartfelt condolences to all who loved him. May he rest in peace.

Honourable members standing in their places.

Debate adjourned.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:32): by leave—I move:

That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.

McCullough, Dr Colleen Margarettta, AO

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:33): On indulgence—I rise to acknowledge the passing of one of Australia's most popular writers, Colleen McCullough AO. Colleen was not always the most critically acclaimed of our authors, but she was a long one of our most read and her stories did indeed become our stories. The most acclaimed of all was The Thorn Birds, the story of Father 'What-a-waste' I suppose we might describe him. I have to confess that as a teenager I found it an absolutely enthralling yarn. She enthralled millions of readers for decades, deftly crossing genres: crime mysteries, what she lovingly called the 'chook books' and history.

Her own life was itself a made-good story as she defied the low expectations of her family. Her father wanted her to leave school as soon as it was legally possible. She did not, and our nation is the better for that. She went on to study at Sydney university and in London, and for 10 years she taught neurophysiology at Yale University in the United States. It was Dr Colleen McCullough who set up the neurophysiology department at the Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney.
She did eventually give in to the urge to write, and while the world certainly needs its doctors it also needs its writers. She helped us see into the worlds of outback Australia, delve into the vagaries of love, reimagine historical figures and play at detective. She was prolific, she was diverse in a way that perhaps no other Australian author has been and, fittingly, the National Trust declared her a living national treasure. I extend condolences to her husband, Ric, to her family, to the people of Norfolk Island, where she lived for many, many years, as well as to her millions of fans around the world. We will miss her. She was one of the best and, as she said of The Thorn Birds, 'You can't repeat a great act'.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:36): Colleen McCullough began her writing career with a youthful act of rebellion. Her mother sent her to the shops with enough money for a new winter coat, but fate intervened. She said, 'I went to town with five pounds to buy an overcoat and I saw a Blue Bird portable typewriter for five pounds, so I bought that instead'. That one impulse purchase immeasurably enriched the literary landscape of our nation and our world.

Colleen wrote her first novel while she was a medical researcher, and she lived a life renowned for art, literature, community service and science in a unique and unprecedented way. Young people who were captivated by The Thorn Birds are parents and grandparents now, watching new generations fall in love with Colleen's evocative word pictures and the clarity of her prose. Colleen has written her final word, but this is not the end of her story. She lives on in bookshelves and libraries around the world and in the hearts of all who loved her. Our heartfelt condolences to Colleen's family and friends. May she rest in peace.

The SPEAKER: As a mark of respect, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:37): by leave—I move:

That further statements in relation to the death of Colleen Margaretta McCullough AO on 29 January 2015 be permitted in the Federation Chamber.

Question agreed to.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:38): I present a revised ministry list.

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<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
<td>The Hon Tony Abbott MP</td>
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ABBOTT MINISTRY 23 DECEMBER 2014

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Other Chamber</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Jamie Briggs MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<td>Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Steven Ciobo MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Trade and Investment Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Steven Ciobo MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Employment (Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
<td>The Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<td>Minister for the Arts (Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Joe Hockey MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Kelly O'Dwyer MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
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<td>Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>The Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
<td>The Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Education and Training</td>
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<td>Minister for Social Services</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Social Services (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
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<td>The Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services</td>
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<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
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</table>
Monday, 9 February 2015  HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  75

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Other Chamber</th>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry and Science</td>
<td>The Hon Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</td>
<td>The Hon Karen Andrews MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon Kevin Andrews MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<td>The Hon Kevin Andrews MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<td>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<td>The Hon Darren Chester MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Communications</td>
<td>The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications</td>
<td>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<td>The Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
<td>The Hon Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
<td>The Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
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Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans' Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.

**CONDOLENCES**

Wright, Mr Keith Webb

The SPEAKER (14:38): I report to the House the death of a former member for Capricornia, Keith Wright.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

Prime Minister

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:39): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that nearly half of his parliamentary colleagues, including two-thirds of
his Liberal backbenchers, have today expressed a lack of confidence in the Prime Minister, how can the Prime Minister claim to have a mandate from this country?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:39): I can understand why the Leader of the Opposition does not want to remember the election. That would be something he would rather forget. This Prime Minister and this government did win an election and that is the mandate that we are carrying out.

**Economy**

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (14:40): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister inform the House how the government will strengthen the Australian economy in 2015?

**Opposition members interjecting—**

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left—and that includes the member for Griffith.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:40): I very much thank the member for Deakin for his question. I accept that there are economic headwinds overseas, but the Australian economy is stronger today than it was 18 months ago.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton has begun again. He will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: Our economy is stronger today than it was 18 months ago, and I am particularly pleased to say that the jobs market has strengthened. Our economy today is growing at an annual rate of 2.7 per cent, and this time last year, under the stewardship of members opposite, it had been growing at only 1.9 per cent.

Ms Butler interjecting—

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

Mr ABBOTT: Over the last year, over calendar 2014, more than 200,000 jobs were created, and that is something that every member on this side of the House is pleased to see. The rate of jobs growth in 2014, under this government, was three times what it was under members opposite in 2013. Exports are growing strongly, with volumes up by over eight per cent over the past year. Building approvals are at near record levels and over 10 per cent higher than a year ago. The registration of new companies is at the highest levels on record. This is what happens when you have a government that is open for business and is always looking for ways to say yes to new proposals to invest, employ, create and deliver prosperity for the Australian people.

I was delighted to be with the member for Deakin, just last week, to visit Timbermate, a business in his electorate—a great Melbourne business that is benefiting from lower electricity prices after the removal of the carbon tax. It is also a business that will benefit from the free trade agreements which will reduce tariffs of up to nine per cent on its products in China and elsewhere. This is a government which is not resting on its laurels or defending the past—it is a government which is looking to the future. Shortly there will be a new small business and jobs package, there will be a tax cut for small business, there will be a new package for families focusing on child care. This is a government which is getting on with what the people of Australia elected us to do.
Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:43): My question is to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister planning to abandon any of his budget measures? Or is he just planning to abandon his Treasurer, as he did at the press conference today?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:43): I stand by my Treasurer. I stand by my Treasurer and I stand by my team. This is a government which is delivering the kind of fiscal responsibility which the electorate put us in to deliver. Thanks to the stewardship of the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance we are having real expenditure growth of less than one per cent compared to 3.6 per cent under members opposite. Is it any wonder that members opposite were never able to deliver a surplus—a surplus they promised time and time again. They did not just promise it; they said they had delivered it. The kind of fiscal responsibility and frugality that the Australian people need is being delivered by this government and this Treasurer.

New Colombo Plan

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs—and it was a wonderful pleasure to have the minister in my electorate on Thursday. Will the minister update the House on how—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I think the honourable member had best begin her question again, and we will have some silence so we can hear it.

Ms SCOTT: My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister please update the House on how the government’s New Colombo Plan is helping young Australians to live, study and work in the Indo-Pacific region?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:45): I thank the member for Lindsay for her question. The New Colombo Plan is one of the government’s signature foreign policy initiatives, and we are rolling it out across the Indian Ocean-Asia-Pacific region. We are now partnering with 38 nations in our region to provide young Australian undergraduates with the opportunity to study and live and work at locations in our region. I do not think members of the House should underestimate the impact that this signature policy is having in the region. Members will recall that President Xi Jinping referred to the New Colombo Plan and how China was ready to partner with Australia during his address to the joint sitting of the parliament last year. Indeed, Prime Minister Abe has also raised the New Colombo Plan as a great example of the strengthening and deepening of the relationship between Australia and Japan. I have attended regional forums of ASEAN where the New Colombo Plan has been raised as a great example of the connectivity that is required in our region, building government-to-government links, people to people, university to university, business to business.

We have now announced this year’s 69 12-month scholarships for students to study in the region and 3,150 mobility grants up to a semester long. So we have now announced that, in total, 4,600 students will have the opportunity to live, study and work under the New Colombo Plan in our region. Last Thursday, the member for Lindsay and I attended a number of events in her electorate, including at the University of Western Sydney. The university has received grants and scholarships for 188 students from that university to study in one of the
38 partner countries in our region. Six 12-month scholarships have been awarded and the rest in mobility and semester-long grants.

One student, a young lady by the name of Jasmin Hammond, has come back from her New Colombo Plan experience from last year. She is the first Indigenous Australian to receive a scholarship under the New Colombo Plan. While she was studying at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology—she was studying chemistry and physics, and her period there will be counted towards her degree in Australia—she decided that she wanted to study medicine. The experience in Hong Kong was such that she decided to transform her life and to try and get into medicine, and she has been accepted by the University of Western Sydney into medicine. She grew up back of Bourke, in a country town of about 1,500 people. She is now going to study medicine at the University of Western Sydney, because she wants to give back to her local community. This is the kind of transformational experience that young students are receiving under the New Colombo Plan. We are investing in our future. We invest our young people.

Abbott Government

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:48): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Liberal member for Brisbane's perceptive comments yesterday: We cannot govern ourselves in an internal climate of fear and intimidation. And that is the unacceptable situation we have endured for the past five years. Does the Prime Minister agree with the member for Brisbane?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:49): I certainly agree that it is time to get on with government. It is time to get on with government. That is exactly what we are doing, with a new families package that will focus on child care, with a jobs and small business package that will focus on a tax cut for small business. That builds on the work that this government has already done to repeal the carbon tax, a $550-a-year benefit for every household; to repeal the mining tax; to restore Australia's reputation as a place to invest; and three free trade agreements that are setting up the future. So this is a government which is getting on with what is right for the people of Australia. We have a plan to improve our economy. All members opposite have is one long, loud complaint—no answers, just a complaint.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:50): I wish to advise House that we have with us a parliamentary delegation from Canada and the Canadian branch of the CPA, led by Mr Joe Preston. We make the delegation most welcome and hope you enjoy your stay with us.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Higher Education

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (14:50): My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, your amended higher education bill includes a minimalist structural adjustment fund. Can you please give details of how the fund will be allocated, how its impact will be measured and the expected outcomes, and will you give an assurance to the House that regional students, families, businesses and employees will not be disadvantaged by this legislation?
Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:51):
I can certainly give that assurance to the member for Indi. I can certainly give her that assurance that rural and regional businesses, parents, students and families will not be disadvantaged, because in fact one of the main purposes of the government's higher education reform bill is to support disadvantaged students and disadvantaged communities, and we are doing that in a number of ways. One of those the member has mentioned—the structural adjustment fund. I know that recently she conducted an educational forum in the La Trobe campus at Wodonga, and many of the people who presented and asked questions at that forum talked about the transformative impact of the government's higher education reform bill, particularly John Dewar, the vice-chancellor of La Trobe University, who talked about the massive expansion of the pathways programs, the pathways places, that would hugely advantage rural and regional Australia and give young people, who often use those programs to get into undergraduate degrees, an enormous boost. Typically, pathways programs are used by first-in-family university goers and people from rural and regional backgrounds or urban disadvantaged students. Through that expansion of the pathways programs, which will not happen without the reforms, we are supporting rural and regional Australia.

The member also mentioned the structural adjustment fund. As part of the new reform bill, picking up the concerns and interests of the crossbench in the Senate, and also my own colleagues here on the coalition side, and the crossbench in the House of Representatives, we have introduced a $100 million over three years structural adjustment fund. That is to support those universities that are in areas where there is limited capacity to expand their revenue base and they are probably not doing the expensive research that would allow them to take full advantage of the government's reform agenda. Through the structural adjustment fund, we will be able to support those universities—typically ones like Charles Sturt University, Southern Cross, the Regional Universities Network campuses. The Regional Universities Network, which represents almost all of the regional universities in Australia, said:
… RUN considers that the only way the sector can maintain quality and remain internationally competitive is through the deregulation of student fees …
The RUN universities, like all universities across Australia, recognise that the government's reform agenda in higher education is transformative and it is vital for disadvantaged students in particular to make our system the best university system in the world, with some of the best universities in the world.

Budget

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:54): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer please update the House on the green shoots in the Australian economy over recent months? How will the government's policies help build a stronger, more prosperous economy with stronger growth and with more jobs?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:54): That is a great question because it addresses the issues at the heart of the nation's thinking, and that is: how do we create more jobs and greater prosperity for everyday Australians? Despite inheriting a bit of a mess from the Labor Party, we have got on with the job of fixing the economy and fixing the budget. The challenge at the moment with the budget is that the government every day is spending $100 million more than it receives. So we are spending $100 million a day more than we collect in taxation revenue. As anyone involved in business knows—
Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield!

Mr HOCKEY: and I note that the honourable member for Petrie was involved in small business—you cannot continue to write out cheques for more money than you collect. Every single day when we have to write out a cheque for $100 million more than we collect, in day-to-day expenditure on health and education and welfare and all the other things government do, we have to make a borrowing of $100 million to make the difference, and at the moment we are spending $40 million a day on interest repayments on the debt that was left by Labor and the debt we continue to accrue. Despite all of that, over the last 12 months we have seen job growth in Australia grow at three times the amount of jobs each day that occurred under Labor. In fact, under us last year, 600 new jobs were created every day—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield, one more time and you are out!

Mr HOCKEY: compared to 200 jobs a day under Labor. There are good green shoots before us. Job advertisement levels, as measured by the ANZ, are, as of today, at the highest level in over two years. Job ads are growing at 13.6 per cent over the year. That means more jobs for everyday Australians. Importantly, the Dun and Bradstreet Business Expectations Survey, which was released last week, identified that the outlook on employment is the most positive it has been in over a decade. So job ads—opportunities for jobs and growth—coming out at the moment, from Dun and Bradstreet, from ANZ and from a range of other surveys, indicate that the economy is strengthening. Despite all of that, the Labor Party unfortunately continues to oppose everything we do to try and create more jobs and greater prosperity for the Australian people. I would say to the Australian Labor Party: the best thing that the Labor Party can do for jobs is get out of the way.

Minister for Communications

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Minister, why are you still on the front bench?

The SPEAKER: That question is not in order.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Under Practice, a minister can be questioned on matters for which he or she is responsible or officially connected. If he is not responsible for his own role on the front bench, what is the point of question time at all?

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Broadband

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (14:58): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Will the minister update the House—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Minister for Communications is asking for the opportunity to answer the question. He is indicating—

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat. The member for Banks has the call.

Mr COLEMAN: My question is to the Minister for Communications. Will the minister update the House on how NBN Co's revised agreements with Optus and Telstra will assist in
rolling out high-speed broadband to all Australians sooner, at less cost to taxpayers and more affordably for consumers?

Mr Turnbull (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (14:59): I want to thank the member for Banks for his question. When the Labor government established the NBN project, it entered into a most remarkably uncommercial set of agreements with Telstra and Optus whereby NBN Co and the Australian government would pay tens of billions of dollars to Telstra and Optus to switch off their copper networks, their cable TV networks and their hybrid fibre coax networks so that the NBN could overbuild it with fibre to the premises.

What was remarkable was that Senator Conroy and Prime Minister Gillard did not bother to reserve the right to use any part of that infrastructure they were paying Telstra and Optus to decommission. They paid them entirely for it—complete value—but had no right to use any part of it. What we have managed to do, and concluded at the end of last year—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The Speaker: The member for Wakefield will remove himself under 94(a).

The member for Wakefield then left the chamber.

Mr Turnbull: was to agree with Telstra and Optus, for no additional payment—and I stress this: for no additional payment—to be able to use those copper and hybrid fibre coax networks to enable us to complete the project much sooner, much cheaper and much more affordably.

Now, turning to the member for Banks's electorate: 77 per cent of the premises in his electorate are passed with cable TV networks—the HFC networks. They would all have been switched off by the Labor Party, decommissioned and turned into junk. They can now be used to deliver—as they do today—100 megabit per second speeds and, with very straightforward modifications which are being deployed all over the world, to go right up to one gigabit per second speeds without having to roll out new cable infrastructure. You might think that is common sense but, of course, it was a penetrating glimpse of the obvious that was denied to the Labor Party—the most uncommercial deal.

Senator Conroy at one point said, 'Who would buy Telstra's copper?' Well, of course, we have not bought it; we have negotiated to acquire it for no extra cost. He said, 'Come on down! Alan Bond, Kerry Packer would be laughing all the way to the bank'—

Mr Clare: Speaker, I rise on a point of order, on relevance. The minister is only being about 39 per cent relevant and he needs to be 100 per cent relevant here—

The Speaker: The member will resume his seat! There is no point of order.

Mr Turnbull: The shadow minister, like his leader, gets these zingers. They come in here with a zinger. It is like a bit of chewing tobacco. They roll it up against the top of their mouths, they roll it around their cheeks, their pupils dilate, there is a straining expression reminiscent to anyone who has had experience with young children and then—boom!—out it comes! A literary Exocet aimed at the heart of your victim! How can I take the pressure from the shadow minister? He is almost as deadly as his master!
MOTIONS
Prime Minister

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (09:55): I seek leave to move that this House has no confidence in the Prime Minister.

Leave not granted.

Mr SHORTEN: I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the member for Maribyrnong from moving the following motion forthwith:

That this House has no confidence in the Prime Minister.

Seventeen months ago the Prime Minister promised Australian voters a stable, mature and adult government. What has happened? There have been many promises broken by this government, but the promise to run a stable and mature government is arguably the biggest broken promise of this sad government's last 17 months.

The Australian people, unlike those in the parallel universe the government inhabits, have watched with amazement in the last few weeks and days as the once-great Liberal Party huffs and puffs its way up to a leadership spill. Australians know this government is not working for them. I say to the Liberal backbenchers of this government and to the Liberal frontbenchers: it does not matter who you choose. The problem is not the salesperson; the problem is what you are selling to people.

As for the member for Wentworth, who we just heard from: never has a member wanted so much yet would do so little to get the position! He, the Zorro of the dispatch box, has said that he wants the job but he will not fight for the job. He is prepared to injure his Prime Minister but he leaves his supporters hanging. He is a veritable ball of ambivalence!

But this is not new in his political career. For two long, excruciating decades we were with the Hamlet of the Liberal Party—to be Labor or to be Liberal, that is the question! Oh yes, we like your look. But in the end, John Howard had a better chance of beating Kim Beazley, so lucky Liberal Party! The ball of ambivalence chose the Liberals. And then what did he do when he came to parliament? He stalked poor old Brendan Nelson. What did Brendan Nelson ever do to deserve Malcolm Turnbull stalking him?

But, of course, the member for Wentworth was angsting on the spill motion over the weekend. He was able to be conned by Godwin Grech—and we will never forget that! Then he could not even come to terms with Nick Minchin. And there, the man who would be if he could be, got beaten by Tony Abbott! Not once, not twice but time and time again.

Mr Pyne: Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition appears to have taken the wrong speech from his office today. Perhaps they were not prepared for the outcome of this morning’s meeting? He clearly appears to be talking about the wrong member of the chamber and you should draw him back to the motion, which is about the Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House makes the point that this is a suspension motion and that the Leader of the Opposition should indeed refer to the suspension motion.

Mr SHORTEN: I take the point of order from the member for ‘hedging your bets’! I was going to come to the Prime Minister. I do not often agree with the Prime Minister's policies—
in fact I very rarely do. But I felt a little bit on Tony Abbott's point of view today. I mean, he is not as articulate as the member for Wentworth, but he is a bundle of fight, our Prime Minister. He is superglued to that seat, member for Wentworth, and you are going to have to blast him out!

I admit that our Prime Minister has a lot of energy. He runs around constantly biting his own tail. But at least he knows how to fight for something, member for Wentworth. The real shame of this debacle today—the real shame today—is that it is not who leads the Liberal Party; it is that we have heard not a word of repentance from the government about their unfair budget. Australians sat there, perhaps waiting to see the outcome of the spill that never was. But they waited to see any humility from any member of the government. The Minister for Finance let it out of the bag yesterday on Insiders. The interviewer asked the Minister the Finance:

Has anyone in the ministry ever complained to you about the budget? Have they suggested to you that it was unfair?

And the Minister for Finance said, 'Not a one.' Some of them may seek to blame Prince Philip and the knighthood, some of them may seek to blame the absentmindedness of Australian voters, some of them may seek to say that it is the internet or social media and some of the may care to say that if only people understood what they were selling then things would be better. Wrong, wrong and wrong again, people. The problem with this government is that it brought down a budget which broke all the promises it made. They broke their promises. 'No new taxes'. Tell that to the people paying taxes. 'No cuts to education'. Tell that to the states losing their funding for schools. Remember the promise about no changes to health care? Tell that to the people paying the GP tax. This nation does not need a new Liberal leader; it needs a new government.

The Australian people are resilient despite this circus that those opposite are running. People are going to work every day, small business is investing and young people are studying and working in the restaurants—working hard. You have got the nurses caring for the sick and the infirm. You have got a lot of people out there in Australia pulling pretty hard, though what you have got is a nation of lifters being led by a government of leaners, and that is the problem in this country. In the last two, three, six and 18 months we have seen this government fail time and time again. This government will not admit that it is not the opinion polls which really matter here. What we have is a government who will not admit that their budget has beaten them. Forget the embroidery of the Australia Day announcement. Forget the embroidery of knights and dames. That shows we have the Prime Minister with a romantic urge for the 1950s—that is life.

It is not the political ineptitude of the government which I worry about; it is their wrong priorities for the nation. They are more interested in Buckingham Palace than Beijing. They are more interested in forcing down an unfair budget, cutting opportunity and cutting hope. If this government wants to learn anything from the last 18 months, we give you this advice: do not cut the pensions, do not cut Medicare, do not introduce a GP tax and do not introduce $100,000 degrees. While you are at it, why don't you build the Navy submarines in Australia like you promised too? While you are at it, here are some other positive ideas from Labor: maybe we could have a mature debate about becoming a republic in this country? While we
are at it, why don't we do something meaningful on the climate change that the on-again, off-again member for Wentworth believes in?

A government member interjecting—

**Mr SHORTEN:** He believed it then, but of course we know and Australia knows that in order for the member for Wentworth to blast the Prime Minister from his seat, he has to sell out whatever views he had on climate change. What we see now is a government causing great disarray with the confidence of Australians. There are clear signs on what this government should do. In the next 12 months you should—

A government member: What would you do, Bill?

**Mr SHORTEN:** You are asking what we should do? Do not cut Medicare. Do not wreck the higher education system. Do not touch the pensioners. What we need is a strategy for growth in this country and you do not have it.

*Mr Hockey interjecting—*

**Mr SHORTEN:** There is the Treasurer, the ultimate hollow man of Australian politics!

The best proposition we have for this nation is that you drop this budget in its entirety, admit that you have wasted 18 months of the nation's life that we will not get back. Furthermore, we need to stop the marginalisation of the middle class of Australia. You opened up an attack on the minimum wage in this country. You opened up an attack on the aspiration of Australians to have a decent income. You have abandoned the manufacturing sector in this country. This government dares to tell people that if they had a different message-maker then all would be good.

The fundamental problem in this nation is that the Liberal Party has drifted too far to the right. You no longer represent the mainstream of Australian thinking. In that last budget you certainly bit off more than you could chew, and it was because you broke the covenant of trust with the Australian voters. You can sit there and you can put your hands over your ears and say, 'None of this is true.' But the truth of the matter is that Australians have low tolerance for a government who lied their way into office. You do not need different social media. You do not need to have different leaders. What you have to do is to not tell lies to the Australian people. This morning was a debacle. We know it was a debacle, and you know it was a debacle, as are these constant references saying that somehow you have sorted all your issues out. Until you sort out the budget and until you sort out your attack on the working people of Australia, and until you stop intimidating and oppressing the poor and the vulnerable in Australia, your problems will never be fixed.

The Liberal Party has moved the political debate in this country far too much to the extremes. You are an extreme government motivated by an extreme ideology and the member for Wentworth, no matter what he has said in the past, has shown that he is a man prepared to say and do anything to be the Prime Minister of the Liberal Party, and that is not good enough for this country. Australians have not only worked out this Prime Minister; they have worked out the member for Wentworth—a man who will say and do anything to be in power. The answer is clear: we need to have a government who will not cut pensions, who will not introduce— *(Time expired)*

**The SPEAKER (15:13):** Is the motion seconded?
Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:13): I rise to second the motion. Standing orders need to be suspended today and this motion debated and voted on, because all of us in here know that this is not over. This was not a convincing victory for the Prime Minister in the Liberal Party party room today. It was not convincing victory, because the people of Australia will not accept this man as their Prime Minister. We saw today a historic 68 per cent disapproval rating in Newspoll. This is not over because the Prime Minister cannot survive a 68 per cent disapproval rating in Newspoll. But there is something more important than that: this Prime Minister cannot survive the disapproval of his own backbench. What we know from the vote today in the Liberal Party party room is that two-thirds of this Prime Minister’s backbench do not back him. They do not have his back. Two-thirds of his own backbench do not back this Prime Minister. And it is plain that, if the executive had not been bound today, this result would have been even closer.

Standing orders need to be suspended because we know this is not over—because, as the Leader of the Opposition said, it is not the salesman that is the problem; it is the stinking budget that he has been trying to sell. It is the broken promises that have led us to this position. It is the fact that the Prime Minister said before the election, ‘No cuts to health, no cuts to education, no change to pensions, no new taxes, no cuts to the ABC and SBS,’ and since that time he has broken every single one of those promises.

But I do not blame the Prime Minister for that. We have heard from Liberal Party frontbenchers that no-one on the front bench raised in the cabinet or in the ministry that this budget was unfair. Apparently, no-one on the front bench has said that the budget is a problem. So I do not blame the Prime Minister on his own. I say that it does not matter who it is that leads the Liberal Party. Until they get rid of policies which destroy Medicare, which introduce $100,000 university degrees, which cut the age pension and disability pensions, which cut funding for community centres and for homelessness services—until they get rid of the policies that hurt everyday Australians, it does not matter who leads the Liberal Party; the Australian public will not tolerate this budget of broken promises and the Prime Minister that lied his way into office.

For the good of the nation, the leadership of the Liberal Party has to be sorted out. But, more importantly, for the good of the nation, the budget that introduced so many policies that hurt ordinary Australians needs to be dumped. Now, of course, we all remember that it was not just the promises not to cut health, not to cut education and so on that have been broken. We remember the Prime Minister saying that he was going to lead a grown-up government. He was going to lead a government of no surprises and no excuses. Well, how is that going for you? This has been a government that has dropped the ball.

Australia is taking its place in a world that is changing all the time. We see changing power relations between the great powers. What is Australia’s future in this new world order? Joshua Kurlantzick, the senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, said this on 5 February: Is Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott the most incompetent leader of any industrialized democracy?

And he answered:

Abbott’s policies have been all over the map, and the lack of coherence has often made the prime minister seem ill-informed and incapable of understanding complex policy issues.
So we need a suspension of standing orders today because we need to sort out the leadership once and for all. We need to sort out the budget of broken promises once and for all. But, most importantly, we need to chart a course for Australia’s future that provides certainty to working people in Australia. *(Time expired)*

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:18): Well, I will say this, Madam Speaker: we are not going to take lessons in unity from a Leader of the Opposition who backstabbed two prime ministers. We have heard members opposite—

Honourable members interjecting—

**The SPEAKER:** We will have some silence—

**Mr ABBOTT:** talking a lot—

Mr Husic interjecting—

Mr Watts interjecting—

The SPEAKER: including from the member for Chifley and the member for Gellibrand.

**Mr ABBOTT:** about a vote of 61-39. Well, I tell you what, Madam Speaker: that is better than Bill Shorten got when he last went before his party room. That is better than Bill Shorten got when he last went before the caucus.

I will say this to the Leader of the Opposition: sure, this government has not got everything right. Sure, this government does not pretend to be perfect. But this is what this government has not done. We have not wasted billions of dollars. We have not put hundreds of lives at risk. And we have not jeopardised Australia’s vital international relationships. This is a good government which is getting on with the job of working for the Australian people.

The Leader of the Opposition, you would think, with a motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister of our country, would have been prepared to stand up with a serious critique. What we saw from this Leader of the Opposition was the kind of cheap sneer and smear which proves that the Labor Party has not learned any lessons. It is in denial about what it did when it was in government.

Ms Ryan interjecting—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Lalor is not in her seat!

**Mr ABBOTT:** It has proved that it is utterly, completely unsuitable ever to occupy the government benches of this country.

I accept that this government has had difficulty getting some of its budget measures through the Senate. I accept that. But let us be very clear about exactly what this government has been dealing with. What this government has been dealing with is an absolute fiscal disaster created by members opposite—a fiscal nightmare of unprecedented proportions, selling this country down the river for years to come, intergenerational theft against our children and our grandchildren—and they are not man enough to own up to the problems that they have created. They are not man enough to offer to be part of the solution rather than simply part of the problem.

Let us look at what members opposite created when they were in government: $667 billion of projected debt, $123 billion of accumulated deficits—

Ms Owens interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta will desist!

Mr ABBOTT: the six largest deficits in our history, debt growing and growing and growing, and our country paying $1 billion a month every single month just to pay the interest on Labor’s debt. It was not just the fiscal ineptitude; it was the utter administrative incompetence of members opposite. They spent $2.5 billion putting pink batts into people’s roofs. That killed people. And then they spent the money pulling them out. They spent more than $17 billion on overpriced school halls. They promised to spend $43 billion on a National Broadband Network that was going nowhere fast. Thanks to the stewardship of the member for Wentworth, the Minister for Communications, finally the National Broadband Network is rolling out affordably, on budget and on a revised timetable.

This is a government which is getting on with the job for which it was elected. We promised to stop the boats—they have stopped. We promised to repeal the carbon tax—that is gone. We promised to get rid of the mining tax—that has gone too. We promised to get on with building roads—that is happening, except in states where the Labor government has decided that it does not want new roads. We are getting on with the business of getting our budget back under control.

Members opposite have no plan for the future. They have absolutely no plan for the future. All they have is a long litany of complaints. It is an absolute betrayal. It is a betrayal of our country. It is a betrayal of the kind of decent Labor leaders that members opposite have had in the past, who actually believed in our country and would not just talk about their beliefs—they would actually get on with the kind of reforms that our country needed.

The Leader of the Opposition was asked what his solutions were, and all he could say was a whole lot of things that he would not do. We are prepared to do things. We are prepared to do the tough things, the difficult but necessary things that our country needs if our children and our grandchildren are to enjoy the kind of prosperity and the kind of standard of living that they deserve and which we inherited. This government is determined to ensure that this generation is as good to future generations as previous generations were good to us. We are not going to sell out the future the way members opposite did when they were in government just 18 months ago.

Let’s look at what this government has actually delivered: 213,000 jobs in our first calendar year. The Leader of the Opposition says that we are selling out working people. I tell you what: there are more working people now, thanks to this government. Jobs growth now is three times what it was in the last year of the former government. Economic growth is 2.7 per cent, up from 1.9 per cent a year ago. Housing starts are at near record levels—they are 10 per cent higher than they were a year ago. Business registrations are at an all-time record.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about climate change. We will deliver a 12 per cent cut in our emissions on 2005 levels by 2020. We will deliver, on a per capita basis, a 30 per cent cut in emissions by 2020, because we do not just talk about climate change; we do what is necessary. We put the direct action measures that are necessary in place to actually deliver a cut in emissions.

When it comes to Medicare, we are prepared to face up to the reality. It cost us $8 billion a decade ago. It is costing us $20 billion today. It will cost us $34 billion in a decade’s time. We
are prepared to work with the medical profession of this country to come up with sustainable and lasting reforms.

Members opposite have one strategy for economic growth: it is to spend money they do not have; it is to waste our children's and our grandchildren's money on things like pink batts, school halls and an NBN that was never getting anywhere fast under Labor. The Leader of the Opposition asks, 'What about getting on with building submarines?' The Leader of the Opposition's contribution to the submarine debate was to engage in cheap, racist ranting against the people of Japan. That was the Leader of the Opposition's contribution, just like he engaged in cheap, xenophobic ranting against foreign workers with his anti-457 campaign when he was in government just a few years ago.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: the Leader of the Opposition has had his attention drawn to the issue of this being a suspension motion. In those last comments the Prime Minister has gone so far away from it being a suspension motion, he should be withdrawing that.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. The Prime Minister will refer to the suspension motion.

Mr ABBOTT: If it pleases the Leader of the Opposition, I withdraw. The Labor Party's idea of promoting economic growth is simply to spend money that they do not have. It is not just modern Labor that spends money on things like pink batts that catch fire in people's roofs, school halls that cost double or triple what they should cost and a National Broadband Network that was going nowhere fast; Labor in Victoria is now proposing to spend $1 billion not to build a road. That is their idea of economic growth—spending money not to build a road. This government is getting on with delivering for the Australian people. We were elected to do that, and that is what we are doing.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the suspension motion be agreed to.

The House divided. [15:32]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

<table>
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<th>Ayes .........................54</th>
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<td>Noes ..........................87</td>
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<td>Majority .....................33</td>
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AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP

Bird, SL
Bowen, CE

Brodman, G
Burke, AS

Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE

Chesters, LM
Clare, JD

Claydon, SC
Collins, JM

Conroy, PM
Danby, M

Dreyfus, MA
Elliot, MJ

Ellis, KM
Feeney, D

Ferguson, LDT
Fitzgibbon, JA

Giles, AJ
Gray, G

Griffin, AP
Hall, JG (teller)

Hayes, CP
Husic, EN

Jones, SP
King, CF

Leigh, AK
Macklin, JL

CHAMBER
AYES

MacTiernan, AJGC  Marles, RD
McGowan, C  Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK  O'Connor, BPJ
O'Neil, CE  Owens, J
Parke, M  Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ  Ripoll, BF
Rishworth, AL  Rowland, MA
Ryan, JC (teller)  Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE  Swan, WM
Thistlethwaite, MJ  Thomson, KJ
Vavakouinou, M  Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD  Zappia, A

NOES

Abbott, AJ  Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ  Andrews, KL
Baldwin, RC  Billson, BF
Bishop, Ji  Briggs, JE
Broad, AJ  Broadbent, RE
Brough, MT  Buchholz, S (teller)
Chester, D  Christensen, GR
Ciobo, SM  Cobb, JK
Coleman, DB  Coulton, M (teller)
Dutton, PC  Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW  Frydenberg, JA
Gambaro, T  Gillespie, DA
Goodenough, IR  Griggs, NL
Hartsuyker, L  Hawke, AG
Henderson, SM  Hendy, PW
Hockey, JB  Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR  Hunt, GA
Hutchinson, ER  Irons, SJ
Jensen, DG  Jones, ET
Joyce, BT  Keenan, M
Kelly, C  Laming, A
Landry, ML  Laundry, C
Ley, SP  Macfarlane, IE
Marino, NB  Markus, LE
Matheson, RG  McNamara, KJ
Morrison, SJ  Nikolic, AA
O'Dowd, KD  O'Dwyer, KM
Pasin, A  Pitt, KJ
Porter, CC  Prentice, J
Price, ML  Pyne, CM
Ramsey, RE  Randall, DJ
Robb, AJ  Robert, SR
Roy, WB  Ruddock, PM
Scott, BC  Scott, FM
Simpkins, LXL  Smith, ADH
Southcott, AJ  Stone, SN
Sudmalis, AE  Sukkar, MS
Taylor, AJ  Tehan, DT
Question negatived

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

AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS

The SPEAKER: I present the Auditor-General's Audit reports numbers 10 to 20, 2014-15. Ordered that the reports be made parliamentary papers.

PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE HOLDERS

Speaker's Panel

The SPEAKER (15:37): Pursuant to standing order 17, I lay on the table my warrant revoking the nomination of the honourable members for McPherson and Pearce to be members of the Speaker's panel.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (15:38): I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr NIKOLIC: I do, indeed.

The SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Mr NIKOLIC: On 7 December, a Tasmanian Labor senator, Senator Anne Urquhart, claimed in a media release that I had misled parliament by falsely claiming Labor's 2012 coastal shipping legislation had resulted in a 63 per cent increase in freight rates for Bell Bay Aluminium within my electorate of Bass. Senator Urquhart's assertions were regrettably published by the Launceston Examiner on 9 December. But my claim about a highly damaging 63 per cent increase in freight costs at Bell Bay Aluminium is supported by submissions the company made to the Productivity Commission in both December 2013 and February 2014. I will quote briefly the relevant section:

Following the introduction of the Coastal Trading Act 2012, BBA faced increased costs from $18.20 a tonne in 2011 to $29.70 in 2012, or a 63 per cent increase.

Senator Urquhart must therefore accept the truth of my comments and the appalling damage of Labor's coastal shipping charges, which have destroyed jobs in my home state of Tasmania and in the rest of Australia, which all depend on efficient sea freight.
Cognate debate.
Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (15:40): When you think about it, there are two things in agriculture policy that rise above all others; there are two things that are paramount. The first is natural resource management and sustainability. The second is biosecurity. As a bill implementing the reform of our biosecurity construct and architecture, this is one of the most important debates this House will have this decade. That is no exaggeration. Indeed, maybe I should have said 'this century'; after all it has been just a little more than a century since we last put our quarantine system into effect.

So this is very much—so far at least—a once-in-a-century proposition. This bill means as much as any defence or national security bill. It is that important. On that basis, it is as deserving of bipartisan support as is any other matter that comes before this parliament. By the way, I have sought to bring bipartisan to the agriculture portfolio more generally, because agriculture is so important. Agriculture is so important to our future, so complex and in need of such long time-horizons—we will always have our disagreements, and any opposition not having its disagreements with the government would not be doing its job to full effect—that we must, generally speaking, strive to take a bipartisan approach to agriculture policy.

It is important to the nation debate because, like defence, it goes to our very existence. Dropping the ball on agriculture policy would be an existential threat, because maintaining our food security—our ability to sustain ourselves independent of any other country—goes to the very survival of our country.

So biosecurity—formerly or more commonly known as our quarantine regime—is of paramount importance to this place. Yet, as the Beale inquiry—a seminal report into our biosecurity system—noted, biosecurity in this place usually only rates a mention when something goes wrong, rather than regularly rating a mention as things almost always go right. That is somewhat a source of disappointment to me and I am sure to many others in this place.

This bill, like the Beale review and other reviews that went before it, is a Labor government initiative. It was churlish, I have to say—departing from the bipartisan tone for just a moment—for the current minister not to acknowledge that fact. Indeed, the Abbott government has now sat on this bill for almost 18 months. It was an initiative of a Labor government. It was progressed and developed by a Labor government. The Labor government
was ready to implement the reform when it lost office 17 months ago. Indeed, it was reported that:

Mr Joyce said his northern venture also allowed him to prepare for impending legislative changes, with a comprehensive redesign of the Biosecurity Act on the table.

"The Biosecurity Act has been sitting with us since Methuselah was a young child," he said.

Somewhat of an exaggeration, I think—

It's an incredibly complicated piece of legislation that we have to completely update for 2014.

He was speaking last year—

In the legislative framework, we're rewriting the whole Act so in essence it takes into account all of the requirements we have … bringing it into the modern world to deal with modern problems—the problems of 1908 are not the problems now.

I do not disagree with any of that. Again it was rather churlish of him to be claiming this bill as his own when, as we all know in this place, it had its origins with the member for Watson when he was the minister and was progressed right through the tenure of Senator Ludwig, so a long time ago. It was Labor that recognised the importance of upgrading and modernising Australia's biosecurity laws and it was a Labor government that first introduced the bill right back in 2012.

On 19 February 2008 the then minister for agriculture, the member for Watson, announced the comprehensive independent review of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity arrangements to be undertaken by an independent panel of experts and chaired, as I indicated, by Roger Beale AO. The current bill before the parliament is essentially identical to Labor's bill, save for a few minor adjustments, which on face value at least I do not have any great difficulty with, and save for a very big departure—the absence of any guarantee that the Inspector-General of Biosecurity will continue to play a role. I will return to that point.

The bill is about modernising the now 107-year-old Quarantine Act. As Beale points out in his seminal report, the very name change from Quarantine Act to Biosecurity Act in itself reflects changing challenges, aspirations, emphasis and of course methods. There has been a shift away from the isolationist approach that those who were around just after the turn of the century were more familiar with to a seamless, broader—from pre border right through to post border—approach to protection of our clean, green, safe image and therefore the protection of our food security.

The Beale report concluded that we have a very good biosecurity system. Its overwhelming success is testament to that. We have had by any measure a very successful approach to keeping disease and pests out of our food chain. Beale also concluded that the system is not perfect. That is fairly obvious. Sadly and tragically we have seen examples of failures in recent years, including during the equine influenza outbreak and crisis, which by the way had a very bad impact on my electorate where you will find, amongst other things, the horse capital of Australia. Beale also reinforced very importantly the view—and I am sure this is a view shared by every person in this place—that a zero risk approach to quarantine is not a feasible approach, not one that is likely to lead to success and certainly not one we could afford in fiscal or resourcing terms. Rather he reinforced a risk based approach to our quarantine system.
Again this bill this a significant modernisation that has been a long time in the making. It has been a long time from 1908 till now and a long time since the Beale inquiry was first initiated. On that basis the opposition will be supporting the bill—our bill—but I want to spend some time expressing very great concern about the key departure I made mention of—and that is the decision to deny the very important initiative in Labor's bill: the establishment and ongoing existence of an independent statutory officer known as the Inspector-General of Biosecurity.

I am going to invite the minister in closing this debate to clarify for the House exactly what the bill now means in practical and technical terms. It appears to me that now, rather than having an independent statutory officer reviewing the performance of our biosecurity system and all of its players, we will have no less than the minister overseeing these processes. That would be of concern to me and of concern to everyone in this place, I am sure, if they are speaking honestly. It should be of concern to the minister, quite frankly, because it is not a responsibility he should even seek to have. It will certainly in my view be of concern to the broad agriculture sector.

This will not be the first offence. The Labor government already had in place the Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity. We had proposed also to further strengthen confidence and to build sustainability in the live cattle trade by putting in place an inspector-general for live animal welfare and live animal exports. Sadly, that commitment did not survive the transition to the new government, much to the chagrin of those who are deeply focused on animal welfare, particularly animal welfare in our live animal export market. The minister seemingly, as far as I can see, without any advice—and if he has reasons and good advice, I certainly invite him to share them with us—a little bit like CBH's exemption from the Wheat Board access code, has unilaterally made a decision that this statutory officer is not needed.

The inspector-general that Labor had in mind has, on an interim basis, and would have, reported independently of the minister's view and indeed the view of the department. It is a mistake to remove this position. The position plays an important role in ensuring the integrity and transparency of the biosecurity import risk analysis process. Stakeholders have the opportunity to appeal where they believe there was significant deviation from the biosecurity import risk analysis process which might have adversely affected their interests. Not only does the inspector-general ensure transparency and integrity in the biosecurity system more broadly; the position also establishes a number of powers to ensure transparency in the way the role is carried out. The position of Inspector-General of Biosecurity is a position that was recommended in numerous reviews over the course of the last 17 years, and yet the minister has apparently unilaterally decided that we do not need him or her. By having a dedicated office to review the performance of functions and the exercise of powers by the director of Biosecurity Australia all Australians can expect an efficient, modern and robust biosecurity framework.

The minister's office appears, on the surface, to remain supportive of the Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity and the continuation of that position for the time being. But given I, as minister, signed off on the interim arrangements, I think in financial year terms almost two years ago, it is my understanding that the interim inspector-general will cease to exist on 1 July this year. It appears to me that, while feigning support and being complementary of the work of the inspector-general thus far, the minister has, without any fanfare, without any
sufficient highlight of this fact—certainly I do not think there was any reference to the fact in his second reading contribution but I would need to check that—just decided to let this position expire on 1 July this year. Why, as we strive, I hope on a bipartisan basis in this place, to capitalise on the growing global food demand, taking advantage of our clean, green, safe image and our high quality food—which gives us our competitive advantage—would we now undermine that in any way by taking away a position which, for the last couple of years, has been very effective, as acknowledged by the minister himself?

This was the same issue with live animal exports. The pause has been broadly criticised and it was painful. It was painful and it was regrettable but born out of it was the best animal welfare system in the world—a system which now is allowing us to open new markets; a system which is building confidence in the regime, in the trade, in the broader community and; therefore, a system which allows us to grow and strengthen the sector and to create so many jobs. It is a shame that the minister does not occasionally acknowledge that when he is taking credit for establishing new markets—although, ironically and almost bizarrely, he does recognise that he was able to do so thanks to the implementation of Labor's quality assurance supply chain.

This is the same. We must have full confidence in our biosecurity system, and we must be able to allow the citizens of this country to see that there is a statutory officer there acting independently and protecting that system. As I have pointed out and as Mr Beale pointed out, it cannot be perfect, but the statutory officer is a key component in my view and in the view of, I am sure, the majority of people in this place—if they were being honest—to making sure that our biosecurity system is the best it possibly can be.

Let us not have the minister claim credit for this bill. Let the credit go where it belongs, and that is to the former Labor government. That is not to say that after 107 years a coalition government would not have got around to the same exercise. I have no doubt it would have done, because the globe—every country—is facing new challenges with the ongoing globalisation of our population and the emergence of new disease and new pests et cetera. So I have no doubt that the coalition government would have come around to the same form of reform itself at some point. But let us not promote this idea that this was somehow something Barnaby Joyce dreamt up overnight. We know he often has those dreams, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott. I am told he brings them to work regularly on a Monday morning, and you might have heard the same.

I began by talking about the importance of agriculture. There is no doubt in my mind that over the course of the next 20 years our economy will transform substantially. We are now thinking of the mining boom. We will be then be thinking more about what I like to describe as the dining boom. But the dining boom will not just come to us; we will need to go to it. Despite the growing demand and doubts about our capacity to meet that demand as a global community, there is a lot of competition out there, a lot of people in other countries seeking to capitalise on the opportunities that dining boom presents. For us it will not be about volume; it will be about quality and profits. With our limited natural resources, we cannot possibly triple or increase our food output fourfold or even greater. But what we can do is ensure that our limited natural resources are dedicated to the areas where we will secure the highest return and the highest quality jobs for Australians. Our advantage will only continue to exist if we maintain our clean, green, safe image.
There has also been a little bit of debate more recently about the way that investors in the future, typically those who manage big superannuation funds for example, will be discerning in their investment decisions, taking into account the ethical standards used in particular sectors. And let there be no doubt that in the future the growing middle classes of Asia will be looking for food from sources where all those ethical standards have been maintained. One of those measures will be the way in which we manage our natural resources, the way in which we manage our water and our soils being the two key examples. That is why it just astounds me that this government has not only still not produced a strategic plan for agriculture in this country but also that it laid down terms of reference for a white paper—now months late—that excluded any consideration of natural resource management and sustainability. The biggest challenge in agriculture for us in the future will be the growing challenge of resource sustainability, in particular the ongoing dry nature of our continent. You cannot have a strategic plan for agriculture without having, as part of that strategic plan, an idea about how you are going to tackle those natural resource sustainability issues, particularly climate change and the ongoing heating up and drying out of this continent.

While we have had 17 months of policy inertia, in other words 17 months without an agriculture policy in this country, our competitors are on the march. They are already working in Asia with their plans; they are already taking advantage of their natural competitive edge. In the meantime, we are just jogging on the spot, marking time. It makes me angry when I see what were very good Labor initiatives, like the one before us today, being undermined by a decision like that going to the position of the Inspector-General of Biosecurity without any real effort to explain the decision, without any real effort to highlight that decision before this place and certainly without any effort whatsoever—in fact, arguably just the opposite—to alert me, as Labor spokesperson on this question, to that initiative and the likely verification of that initiative.

I invite him, when he returns—that is, the minister—to now highlight that point, to provide the sources of advice for his decision and to share with us what he sees on balance as the positives and negatives of that decision. There will always be some of those, I am sure. I welcome the fact that he might be able to come up with some good reasons why it is not necessary to have the inspector-general, but if he does so he needs to also concede that there are real problems with that decision and then attempt to argue that it is a net positive. I do not think he will be able to do that. In fact, I am very sure he will not be able to do that because (1) I have looked at the issue and taken my own advice and (2) I know that if he really thought this was a good idea, it would have been writ large in the briefings to me and it would have been writ large in his earlier contribution in this place.

Maybe he was rolled; maybe this was not his idea. Maybe this was not his idea and he is not proud of it and he wants to sweep it under the carpet. He does not want to talk about it; he knows the adverse consequences for agriculture. I can understand that. Many of us in this room have been ministers and we know how difficult the challenges can be. But for all that Barnaby might be—sorry, the minister—I did not think he was a guy who lacked courage. I would have expected that, even if he did not agree with the cabinet decision, he would have come in here and alerted all those in his constituency who rely so heavily on our biosecurity regime, that he would have come in here and explained the situation to them. The very fact
that he did not do any of that confirms in my mind that this is a bad decision, and he needs to come back in here and explain himself. There will be a Senate inquiry into this bill, and the minister can be sure that we will pursue this issue in great detail in the other place. He has an opportunity to save everyone a bit of time and come in here, on closing this debate, and explain it to everyone in the agriculture sector as well as everyone in the Australian community who are relying upon us to have the best biosecurity system we can possibly have for the future growth, wellbeing and wealth of this country.

I finish where I began: this bill and our biosecurity system are as important as anything else we discuss in this place. It does go to our food security, and beyond that it goes to how wealthy we are likely to be as a country in the coming decades. We cannot grasp that wealth, we cannot make the most of those opportunities without the best biosecurity system in the world. I believe very sincerely that all those who participated on the panel of review would say that the bill Labor had before the House provided the very best biosecurity system we could possibly have. I am not convinced the bill that is before the House, simply because of the exclusion of an ongoing role for the Inspector-General of Biosecurity, is a bill that provides us with the very best biosecurity regime we could possibly have. There is plenty of time for the minister to reflect on that; there is plenty of time for the cabinet to reflect on that; there is plenty of time for the Prime Minister to reflect on that as he contemplates some of his necessary changes in the coming days and weeks, if he lasts that long. There is an opportunity here either to explain and justify it or to reinstate Labor's very important initiative.

The Inspector-General of Biosecurity might cost some money—I know he does—but on any cost-benefit analysis it is hard to see how what would be very small savings in the context of a billion-dollar budget is justified given the risks that would be posed by not ensuring this bill is as strong as it possibly can be and therefore not ensuring that we have the strongest quarantine and biosecurity systems this country can possibly have. So there is our qualified support. Other than for the inspector-general issue, we very strongly support the bill. Now it is over to the minister.

Dr Gillespie (Lyne) (16:08): The legislation currently governing biosecurity, the Quarantine Act, was enacted in 1908. At that stage Australia had only five million people and two passports. The goods arrived under steam, or still occasionally under sail, and the Wright brothers had only flown a plane five years earlier. Now we have 17 million passengers arriving by plane each year and we have supertankers and container ships arriving daily carrying massive volumes of commodities and goods. We have A380s arriving with freight in their cargo bays. Trade has taken off around the world, to Australia and from Australia, as a result of the world's population explosion.

The Quarantine Act has been amended on 50 different occasions since 1908, so it is not unreasonable at all that we have up-to-date and modernised legislation fit for purpose. As the member for Hunter outlined, the purpose of this biosecurity and quarantine legislation is to maintain the security of our $35 billion a year exports in the agricultural and horticultural sector, and to protect the growth of that sector. We have a massive industry in exporting commodities because of our clean and green brand, which is as a result of our disease and pest free status. That has been generated not just by our geographical isolation but also by our quality production methods and agricultural practices. To maintain a our nation's biosecurity in the face of massive volumes as a result of the marked increase in trade, in trading partners...
and product, we physically need to get our act together. There is no way we as a nation can check every single container or every bag of produce that comes through our ports or airports. We need to have a process that will isolate high risk areas. We need to be worried about noxious weeds, about beetles in wood, fruit fly, fire ants and fire blight. We do not want to put at risk our disease free and pest free, clean and green, image. Fire ants alone could damage $8.9 billion worth of product over the next 30 years. Our remaining fruit industry and horticulture would be at risk if fire blight ever took root here. Our marine industry and fisheries, which produce $2.5 billion worth of product, is at risk. Our biosecurity processes have moved towards an extensive import risk analysis process, and, in essence, the higher the risk and the higher the bar, the greater the monitoring and analysis that is required. Then we direct our biosecurity interventions towards those high risk areas.

As the member for Hunter outlined, the Biosecurity Bill was introduced into the parliament in 2012 but it has languished in the wings of the legislative process for too long. I am pleased to see it has finally come before the House. It has been through the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, it has had the Beale review and there has been an enormous input from forums. There was a legislative forum in 2014. It has been to every state and territory government, to primary producers, to over 440 organisations, and to importers and exporters. It has been reviewed by our international trading partners to ensure that we can still manage to export and that we meet our requirements under various trade agreements. All those obligations have been addressed. The legislative forum in October 2014 was extremely well attended and there were voices from all stakeholders. As I mentioned, the Biosecurity Bill 2014, the Biosecurity (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill and the associated companion bills replace the 1908 bill. The charges levied by these bills will now be collected under this umbrella bill.

The member for Hunter spoke about a few issues that he was concerned about. I point out to the House that the Inspector-General of Biosecurity will still be created, but through this legislation under delegation from the minister, not by way of its own stand-alone bill. The main thing is that we have an inspector-general, that the inspection goes on and that the risk process is thorough and exhaustive.

There was concern about the inadequacy of warrants, but the biosecurity enforcement officers will still have multiple warrant provisions to do their jobs. I will just list some of them. There is a monitoring warrant; an investigation warrant; a biosecurity risk assessment warrant; warrants for response zones and monitoring zones; an adjacent premises warrant; a conveyance possession warrant; and a premises possession warrant. This legislation certainly has a lot of teeth behind it. But, if we are going to protect our pest-and-disease-free status and our clean-and-green image amongst the recipients and consumers of our produce, we need to have a vigorous and effective legislative response.

There are many notices that can be issued—enforcement orders and revocation of licences to import. There is a fit-and-proper test that can be applied by the enforcement officers and by the department. There is an associate test, so that anyone who has been guilty of inadequate biosecurity measures and has fallen foul cannot automatically come in the back door by using an associated person to gain entry. The warrants definitely remain in place. Entering property to check on biosecurity issues is allowed.
There is another matter that I should mention to the House. We are all familiar with the horror and the trauma of the Ebola outbreak in central Africa. There are human biosecurity implications as well, and there are human biosecurity orders that can be issued by the Director of Human Biosecurity that will be created by this legislation, so that, if there is a person at risk, control-and-isolation orders and advice can be given to mitigate and control the risk that is represented by that person. These are all very sensible initiatives, because, in an outbreak, an epidemic, of a disease like Ebola, it is the contact tracing and the isolation that will bring the epidemic to its end more quickly than anything else. These biosecurity orders will be very wisely applied, I am sure.

The other issue that has come up in discussion about this legislation is how we are treating ballast water. As you know, all these freighters that travel around the world have refuse—food product, all sorts of waste—and their ballast water can represent a portal of entry. So there are very exhaustive and prescriptive regulations that are embraced by this legislation that mean all the ballast water is treated by processes and is monitored to reduce the risk to as low as physically possible. This includes pre-arrival reporting by planes and freighters. Forewarned is forearmed, so to speak. The legislation also empowers biosecurity officers to enter receiving installations efficiently and in a timely manner.

The rules in this legislation extend to our 12-mile limit and they extend to our external territories. So we have a new situation in Australia now with this legislation. It will allow an efficient focusing of the biosecurity risk analysis so that the actions can be targeted where the risk is highest. It covers all the concerns that have come through in the most extensive, broadly based canvassing of opinions from all involved parties—importers, exporters, producers, transporters—and it is targeted. I extend my recommendation to the House that this legislation be passed. It is timely, it is appropriate, it is extensive and it is incredibly thorough. I commend these bills to the House.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (16:19): I also rise to support the Biosecurity Bill 2014 and the associated legislation. The member for Hunter set out very comprehensively our position. I note that the member who spoke just before me talked about how timely the bills were. I do not think we could really describe their introduction by the government as being particularly expeditious, because the work had been done, fundamentally, under the Labor government, and these modernising provisions were introduced in 2012. One would have thought, given the Abbott government's claim that they are very focused on the agricultural sector, that they might have moved with a little more expedition to get these important, modernising bills through. I do not think any of us would contest the importance of biosecurity, of ensuring that our agricultural sector is safe, that we can be a haven of food production and that many of the diseases that are endemic in many parts of the world, affecting both plants and animals, are kept as much as possible from this country. That will enable us to make a greater contribution to solving the increasing problem of global food supply, but at the same time it will also provide us with a great competitive advantage and enable us to market our product around the world as something that is clean, green and safe.

Quite clearly, the quarantine legislation which has been used in the past has been very antiquated, not keeping up with the degree of global interaction that we now have and, indeed, the science that has enabled us to provide greater scrutiny of these diseases and risks and pests that can potentially infect our agricultural product.
There is no doubt that we need this legislation. We have already reflected on our concern that one aspect of the legislation that we had proposed has not been continued with, and that is the proposal to create the inspector-general of biosecurity as a statutory provision rather than the powers being retained by the agriculture minister. Whilst we have an interim inspector-general, which the Minister for Agriculture says he is happy with, that person will continue to operate in a position that is under direction. The reviews that were done made strong recommendations about this being an independent position with full statutory authority. We think this is an unfortunate dumbing down of the protective infrastructure. The independence that perhaps would have seen some more appropriate action has now been lost.

I want to use this as an opportunity to again express my concern at the conduct of the Department of Agriculture in relation to the Western Australian biotech company Serana. In the past, I have set out the circumstances of how the cavalier attitude—that is probably the best way to describe it—of the Department of Agriculture affected this very successful Western Australian company, which employed 16 Western Australians in regional WA, had a turnover of $20 million a year and growing, and were about to double the size of their business and employment in creating new biotechnical products. Through this most unfortunate set of circumstances, they have been hounded out of Western Australia. I can assure you that we have not yet heard the end of this.

I was very interested to see the answers to questions I got in parliament. I am pleased that I actually have some answers. There are some ministers who fundamentally refuse to answer any questions. The inquiry, which has achieved absolutely nothing, other than to close the company down, has not been able to produce one piece of evidence that any product was brought into Australia unlawfully or that the company had used anything other than Australian bovine serum. It has cost so far—not counting any staff overtime; just pure add-on costs—in the order of $235,000. Legal fees alone are $220,000. There were 20 return airfares to Perth from the eastern states. It is very curious. We have a presence for the federal Department of Agriculture in Western Australia. Indeed, they have been routinely, every six months, auditing the performance of Serana and every audit has proved satisfactory. If you look at the scoring rate of Serana, you will see that it has continually improved. It went from 93 per cent to 95 per cent to 97 per cent—a quite extraordinary compliance performance. The people who were monitoring this company—they monitor all biotech companies—were very happy with their performance.

For reasons that we have still not had explained, we find that the gentleman who was engaged in the investigation started with the department only a few months before the investigation started. Guess what: as soon as we started asking questions, the gentleman left the department. He appeared like a supernova on the landscape, came in, charged off, closed the company down and then moved on. We now find that he was not a general investigations officer; he was an investigations officer for the Central East region. We ask: how was this gentleman selected to be the one who was going to do an investigation into a Western Australian company? Put aside all the logistics of this, such as flying teams of people over from the east to Western Australia. Why was this person, whose job was in the Central East, given the investigation in Western Australia? Bear in mind that there is considerable evidence that behind the inquiry have been complaints and the conduct of a competitor that has ruthlessly gone in, in our view, to bring down the Western Australian company.
The company announced that it was no longer going to operate in Western Australia, notwithstanding the facts that there had been no finding against it and that all 64 tests of its bovine serum had proved that it was not illegally imported; it had Australian or New Zealand provenance. Nevertheless, the campaign of harassment continued until the company announced it was closing down. A short time after that, the competitor went in and signed contracts with the suppliers who formerly supplied the company. I think there is something incredibly dodgy about this.

I am very concerned about the conduct of the minister in this. When this matter first came to my attention I presumed, quite rightly, that a minister could not be expected to have known about this, and so I simply wrote to him, outlining the circumstances and asking if he could undertake an investigation. Unfortunately, I did not realise at that time that it had already been raised with him. The minister's office sought to dissuade us from following up on this inquiry, which we did not. It seems to me from all the statements that have been made by the minister, that he has just completely lacked the ability to scrutinise independently or to exercise any independent judgement about this matter and to see the manifest injustice of what has happened to this company, Serana.

Again, going back to biosecurity: one of the things that is truly appalling here is the claim that, 'We were scared that these people were bringing in product that came from banned countries and could have had foot-and-mouth disease. We were really concerned'. So they came in, tied up the whole premises—even those things that have nothing to do with bovine serum—and then they did not test it. They just left it there. It was left there for a couple of months. There was no testing done. It was not until this matter went before the Federal Court and the Federal Court absolutely lambasted the department and the way they conducted themselves, and their failure to conduct any test, that they then went off and tested this product that they were allegedly so concerned about. They were allegedly so concerned about foot-and-mouth disease, but had this stuff in quarantine for two months and failed to do any testing of the product. They said, 'Oh, it was quite hard to test the product.' But, of course, once the Federal Court judge had reflected so negatively upon the department, they actually found, 'Oh, we can get the product tested in New South Wales. Oh yeah, we'll get it tested.' They had it tested and, of course, it proved that there was no evidence whatsoever that this material had been brought in from companies that were banned from the importation of this product.

So here is this company that has absolutely dedicated itself to creating a great Australian business, and they have been systematically disadvantaged and dealt with appallingly by the Department of Agriculture and Food and, I do say, by the minister. I am very concerned that in a media interview the minister alleged that these people had been importing this product when in fact he has absolutely no evidence that that is the case and that the evidence is to the contrary.

Our pursuit of this matter is not going to go away. Our end objective is to try to persuade this company to return to Western Australia and to re-establish their business. We are working really hard to try to secure that outcome. But, of course, they are not prepared to come back until the department of agriculture are prepared to acknowledge that they have got this wrong or, indeed, are prepared to acknowledge that this company will be treated decently in the future. One of the very alarming aspects of this is how, at the same time that this
investigation was going on, there was a whole range of matters of Customs that were used. This company, that had been importing various plastic tabs for five years to use on their product, suddenly had those things held up in Customs. It would appear that across a number of related entities within this there was a concerted campaign of harassment, designed to intimidate this company and to make them realise that there was no place for them to operate.

We have put all these matters before the ombudsman, who is taking quite some time to complete a report on this matter. But regardless, you can rest assured that we are not going to let this matter go. This has been a gross injustice and has led to—as I said—16 people in Bunbury losing their fantastic jobs—(Time expired)

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (16:34): I rise to speak on the Biosecurity Bill 2014 in this cognate debate. It is intended to ensure that we continue to provide a strong regulatory framework to manage biosecurity risks here in Australia, both now and into the future.

This bill, if enacted, will provide the legislative means to manage the risk of pests and diseases entering Australian territory—an island nation, which has of course been extremely good in our history at managing these biosecurity risks. Of course, these risks cause harm—or, at least, have the potential to cause harm—to animals, plants, humans, the environment and the economy. The bill will also support access to fast-growing export markets which are sensitive to biosecurity risks. This is increasingly important as we as a government work to reduce trade barriers through our various free trade agreements which, as farmers in my electorate know, are an extraordinary opportunity for Australia and for Australian farmers. We must remember that we cannot allow tariff barriers to be replaced with non-tariff barriers through concerns about biosecurity.

This legislation has been developed over many years. There has been significant consultation with industry, state and territory governments, environment groups, health professionals, the general public and our trading partners for those all-important export markets I mentioned earlier. Indeed, over 440 organisations have been consulted over the past six years in reference to these changes. Those consulted include organisations that would be regulated by the legislation, such as shipping, petroleum, logistics and research organisations, and those who have an interest, such as the environment groups, as I said before, and farmers.

I will speak a little later about agriculture, but I said earlier that one of the focuses here is risk to human health. When we think of biosecurity, most Australians will think immediately of the catastrophe of Ebola and the extraordinary suffering of the West African people. In August of last year the World Health Organization declared the Ebola virus outbreak a public health emergency of international concern. The Australian Department of Health confirmed widespread and intense transmission continuing in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Of course, the situation deteriorated and by October last year there were 9,000 clinically compatible cases reported in West Africa, and 4,500 people had tragically died. Health authorities are closely monitoring the outbreak overseas, and our border protection agencies are alert to watch for people who are unwell in the air and at airports. All airport border agencies have been provided guidance by the Department of Health to identify passengers who present Ebola-like symptoms in flights or at airports. The health of people who have originated their travel from affected parts of West Africa is being closely checked. It is a quarantinable disease in Australia and it can be controlled and eradicated through a range of quarantine measures.
In another recent example of risk to human health, the outbreak of avian flu, or bird flu, in Asia resulted in 121 deaths across mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and Malaysia.

Biosecurity risks are ever present—as we see with those examples—and that is why vigilance, through appropriate legislation, is absolutely paramount. It is well known that we lead the world on biosecurity. Our reputation as a clean, disease-free, pest-free island nation is built on scrupulous standards. Being an island nation, diseases prevalent elsewhere have been prevented here for many years, and this must continue for our human health, our animal health and our export industries.

Australia works across the full continuum of quarantine with pre-border, border and post-border measures. Surveillance and monitoring of risk areas is critical, along with border control activities which focus on intercepting and quarantining potential threats. Our quarantine laws require that the captain of an international aircraft or vessel must report any passengers or crew who display certain symptoms—as I said earlier, with the illustration of Ebola—and who are ill with particular quarantinable diseases. Our strict laws extend to the importation of certain goods, and that ensures that the biosecurity risk to Australia's agricultural industries and the risk to our unique environment is minimised. As many of us know, when you return home from overseas travel—and I have done this many times—there is a long list you have to declare on arrival: food, dairy, egg products, meat, poultry, seafood, seeds, nuts, fruit and veg, plants, animals and animal products. When you declare these items, they are checked by a department of agriculture officer, who will determine whether they are allowed into Australia.

The bill before the House is designed to better manage those public health risks posed by serious communicable diseases I have outlined and to align our measures with modern science. It contains human health biosecurity measures, which can be not only used to address the risk posed by the disease but also tailored to accommodate an individual's circumstances, and to ensure at the same time that individual liberties are considered and protected.

Quarantining in the early days of our colonial history was strict and resolute, and this goes right back deep into the early days of our European history, where quarantine and biosecurity management was extraordinarily important to our success as a country. The quarantine stations on the Australian mainland have been standing since the 1830s, and they were there as a first line of defence against highly contagious diseases. North Head quarantine station in Sydney was the first safe anchorage point inside the Heads to off-load passengers and crew into New South Wales who were contaminated or suspected of contamination. The site was sufficiently isolated and judged to be a safe distance from the centre of Sydney, with natural spring water to ensure that there was good, reliable, drinkable water. After an average of 40 days, most passengers were released to settle as Australian residents. For smallpox, the period of quarantine was 18 days, and seven days for yellow fever, plague or cholera.

Given how important immigration was to the history and fabric of this nation, that process was extremely important. The University of Sydney academic, Alison Bashford, wrote in 2004:

… the Quarantine Act of 1908 defined quarantinable disease as small pox, plague, cholera, yellow fever, typhus fever, or leprosy. In 1927, encephalitis and mumps were added. Dengue fever was added in 1935 and influenza in 1951.
The act required the master of any vessel to notify authorities of an outbreak of disease—just as much as we need to today—and any disease which included ‘fever or glandular swellings, or any disease suspected to be a quarantinable disease’. Ms Bashford continues:

…from 1947, a person who could not satisfy a quarantine officer that he or she had been successfully vaccinated could be quarantined. There were actual bodily inspections to determine whether passengers had a vaccine scar, from the smallpox vaccine. You could only move from what was understood to be an infected zone into a healthy zone if you had a vaccination scar.

Those stations evolved over 150 years, growing during periods of infectious disease and shrinking during periods of general population health. There is an extraordinary history, one which has been important to the foundation of Australia as a nation. The Biosecurity Bill 2014 is a modern and effective regulatory framework built on the learnings and experiences of hundreds of years of immigration in this country.

I want to turn now to agriculture—having talked much about human health—and the extraordinary importance of biosecurity in agriculture. It sounds like an esoteric topic, but it is far more important to the future of this nation than is widely understood. As I said many times in this House and many times before I came to this House, one of the extraordinary opportunities we face as the mining boom comes off and the mining investment boom slows is in exports of agricultural products. I have spent much of my career identifying and helping organisations into these markets, and I have never seen opportunities like we are seeing at the moment.

Indeed, farmers in my electorate will know what an extraordinary increase in beef prices we saw in the lead-up to and following Christmas this year—an incredible tribute to the work that has been done by this government in reopening the live export trade, to the work that has been done by this government in entering into these free trade agreements, for which beef is absolutely central. It is a very tangible example that every farmer in my electorate—most of them do produce some beef—understands and sees as an illustration of extraordinarily good government.

New powers within this bill allow for the management of a wider range of pests and diseases already present in Australia and for the management of the biosecurity risk posed by the ballast water and sediment held on board domestic and international ships. The reality is that, if we are not able to demonstrate to countries we export into that we are disease free in these critical exports like beef, we will lose those markets. You only have to look at what has happened to the South American exports of beef because of foot-and-mouth disease to understand what an extraordinary impact failure to manage biosecurity risks would have on our exports and our prosperity. The legislation has been designed to support Australia's export markets by sustaining current market access and, most importantly, by ensuring that tariff market barriers which are coming down now with these free trade agreements are not replaced by non-tariff barriers.

I want to focus on one industry in particular. It is very important to many of my constituents around the Young region. That is the cherry industry. Improved biosecurity measures for the export of cherries have the potential to support doubling of exports alongside our free trade agreements from 25 per cent of all cherries produced to 50 per cent of our total national production. That of course will increase the revenues per kilogram of cherries exported and will also provide the foundation for growth of this all-important industry in my
electorate. Exporting cherries is a specialised market requiring attention to detail and cultural sensitivities, biosecurity, packaging, market access and entry and transportation. Cherry Growers Australia are engaging in their own biosecurity protocols—a self-regulated biosecurity management programme—to provide full confidence to all international markets that Australian cherries are not only free from disease and pests but are also of absolutely exceptional quality. Their plan is to take a holistic approach; it combines control measures and checkpoints for ensuring cherries are free from pests, and the plan supports expanding market access for cherries regardless of the growing region in which they are produced. We have a growing season which extends across our summer, which fits a gap in the market because there are not other Southern Hemisphere producers who can provide cherries into that window.

The majority of concern revolves around Queensland fruit fly and Mediterranean fruit fly. Within the Australian cherry industry, the programme that I have talked about has the endorsement of all growers and exporters as the direction required to achieve and increase in exports of the magnitude I have already talked about and also to allow an increase in air freight access as a priority for all importing markets. One of the things we can do that other countries cannot is export fresh cherries on aeroplanes up into these fast-growing Asian markets.

The Australian government's activities in managing fruit fly are focused on regulating the Australian border and managing the risk of exotic fruit flies entering and establishing themselves. We are also involved in fruit fly surveying and response activities in Northern Australia through the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy, in the Torres Strait through the Torres Strait Fruit Fly Strategy and in Australia's near neighbours through the International Plant Health Program. These programs are delivered in partnerships with state, Australian government and international agencies.

Fruit flies are a global agricultural issue with all regions of the world having different native fruit fly species; these different pest species can and do invade other regions. For Australia, the threat of offshore pests entering and establishing is substantial.

Human health is paramount to our success as a country, but agricultural opportunities are paramount to our future. This bill will provide the support we need to manage biosecurity risks in this country.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (16:50): Ensuring that Australia keeps its disease-pest-free, clean-and-green image I believe is one of the most important acts a government can do. Yes, agriculture is important. It is important because it does not just help feed us in this country; it is an important export market. There are a lot of jobs in agriculture and in food production that we currently have in this country that would be put at risk if there were to be significant disease or pests coming into this country and infecting our local product, our local industry, our local agriculture. In my own region of Bendigo we have multiple growers and operations that rely on having a strong and robust biosecurity regime in place. It is one of the reasons why when Labor was in office it introduced the Biosecurity Bill 2012 to update and modernise legislation underpinning Australians' biosecurity framework and to support the implementation of a risk based biosecurity intervention framework.

Some speakers have spoken about the importance of ensuring visitors, travellers and people returning to Australia do not bring their own human diseases into this country. That is
important, and our staff working at our airports make sure that those environments continue to be clean and that people coming in do not carry those diseases. What I want to focus on, though, is what would happen in our agricultural and food production industries if we do not act to ensure that we continue to have a high level of biosecurity within this country. I mentioned Hy-Line Australia, which is a manufacturer in my electorate, which is the largest company in Australia providing day-old chicks, laying chickens and fertilised eggs. It is just outside of Bendigo, in Huntly, and it is the largest supplier of those products here in this country.

When you go there to visit it is not like turning up to a heavy metal manufacturing site where you just have to make sure that you have your steel cap boots on, your fluoro vest and a hard hat. When you go to this facility for a briefing or for a tour, firstly your car has to go through a wash. Then when you get to the site, you yourself have to completely strip down and wash yourself and then go through into the quarantine area and put on a new outfit—new clothes. Your glasses or anything that you may have with you needs to go through another space to make sure that you have not picked up any diseases on your glassware. Then you are ready to go into the actual facility. After that there is a quick briefing on how to maintain the biosecurity of the plant. You can see when you go into the barns, where they have thousands and thousands of birds and the eggs that they lay, why it is so necessary.

When I was there at the end of last year they took me into the shed where the hens laying eggs are actually producing our flu vaccination. It is what they use in our flu vaccinations. That is why it is so important for this facility, just outside of Bendigo, that we have the strongest possible biosecurity measures in place. And it does not just happen at the facility; no person who works in that facility is allowed to own bird life. They forgo having any pet birds of their own, just in case they pick up an unwanted disease and bring it into the facility. The council in the local area of the City of Greater Bendigo has just agreed to amendments to ensure the protection of a buffer zone of a thousand hectares. It is designed to minimise the potential conflict between intensive animal industries, like we have outside of Huntly at Hy-Line, with new residential developments. Huntly is on the other side of the highway, where we have the growth of Bendigo going on. So, our local government is onboard and ensuring at a local level that we are doing our best to ensure the biosecurity at this facility. At a state and federal government level it is also incredibly important. This act becomes so important with regard to the importing of birds, to ensure that whatever product comes in does not bring diseases that could affect the operations and production of this facility in Bendigo.

The poultry industry in the City of Greater Bendigo is worth over $55 million a year. I should also mention Hazeldene's, which is another major manufacturer of chicken and chicken products and also has its own broiler farms and hatcheries. Again, they go from the farm gate to Woolworths and Coles with RSPCA approved chickens; they control every level of operation. Hazeldene's say that one of their major risk concerns is what would happen if there was a biosecurity risk; what would happen if there was a break-out of disease? They always share the experience of when they had an infected bird in one of their hatcheries and they had to destroy the entire flock. It is not just about the cost associated with what happens when we have a biosecurity risk; it is the ongoing cost of rebuilding if you have to basically destroy your entire stock.
Biosecurity is integral to Australia's green, clean, safe food image that we are trying to promote overseas. It has been the talk of why we needed to rush to sign these free trade agreements. On that: if we are going to go down the path of these free trade agreements, we need to make sure that here in this country we can continue to market the product of clean, green, safe food. Other industries in my electorate that have raised concerns about protecting and ensuring that we continue to have that clean, green image is our beef producing industry. Currently, Hardwick's in Kyneton export about 30 per cent of their product to the Middle East—chilled beef and lamb products. They also talk about the importance of biosecurity when it comes to the safe slaughter of product, but they also talk about it in terms of the product that they receive in their food processing works in Kyneton. Another industry to raise it with me are KR Castlemaine. They are the largest employer in Castlemaine, if not Central Victoria. They currently employ over 1,200 people at that facility. They use a range of pork to make our bacon and our smallgoods, and most of it is imported. Where we have rules around biosecurity for importing ham on the bone, that in fact is Australian pork. That exists because of regulations we have and ensures that with the product that they are using there continues to be a market through that Australian pork range. I asked them: if there was to be a change, would they move to a situation where they would just use imported product?—just to put it out there—and they said no, that they are happy with the quality of the product that they get from the Australian piggeries because it really helps with their image. They find that marketing Australian pork, as in Australian clean and green, is the best market label that they have.

B&B Basil is another one of our local manufacturers that spoke to me about the importance of maintaining a strong biosecurity regime. Their business focuses on those microherbs that you get as garnishes, and they have developed an operation and a system outside of Bendigo where they can grow them quickly and get them from the initial seeding phase to being on your plate in China, Japan or Hong Kong within days. They said that what has helped them build their markets overseas is the fact that Australia has a strong clean, green, safe food reputation.

I want to touch on what can go wrong when we lose control of our borders and the lessons from the Victorian wine industry over a century ago. Today Central Victoria, including Bendigo, is known for its wine. Over 100 years ago, it was also known for its wine, but there was an outbreak of a disease, which came over from California, that got into the grapes and into the vines. That came in and completely destroyed over half the crops, half the vines, we had in central Victoria. The governor at the time made an offer to the other winemakers and grape growers: 'We'll give you a subsidy to pull out all your vines just so we can get on top of this disease problem in our vineyards and vines in central Victoria.' Pretty much all of the growers did that, and we lost our wine industry. So it is important to learn the lessons—and learn from the mistakes—of 100 years ago about what can happen if we do not have strict biosecurity measures in place.

What disappoints me the most about this bill is that, when we all know this and we all agree that we want to have a strong agricultural sector, a strong food production sector and a strong wine sector—which rely on a really strong, robust biosecurity regime—and when the majority of the work had already been done by the former, Labor government, it took this government so long to bring it forward. That is my concern about where we are at. It has
taken 18 months to bring this bill forward for debate, even though all the hard work had been done by the former government. It was Labor that recognised the importance of upgrading and modernising Australia's biosecurity laws and it was the former, Labor government that first introduced this legislation back in 2012. The current bill before the parliament is essentially identical to that original bill, which was introduced in the last parliament. That is why it is so unfortunate and so disappointing that it has taken so long for this bill to be introduced.

The Abbott government needs to start focusing on putting our agricultural industries first by ensuring that legislation like this is not delayed. It is important that this government starts to restore funding to the CSIRO, which is so important if we are serious about biosecurity. It is not enough to, finally, bring these Labor bills before the House; this government needs to reinvest in the CSIRO, the scientists and the research body, to partner with our industry to ensure we are meeting the biosecurity challenges that this country faces.

We also need this government to finally release its white paper on agricultural industries. It was promised within 12 months of their taking office, and we are still waiting for it. If the government are so keen to make sure that our agricultural industries mean future job creation for us in this country, if they are so keen to get those trade agreements signed, if they are so keen to say that agriculture will be the new growth industry, then why is it taking them so long to release their agriculture white paper? If the government were serious about biosecurity, then they would continue to invest in the area. They would invest in the science and research. They would bring industry together in a more cooperative way. They would ensure that there was a white paper on agriculture that picked up on this issue, and it would be released sooner rather than later.

In a meeting of the Bendigo Manufacturing Group that I attended on Friday, we spoke a lot about the importance of Bendigo food production and food manufacturing, and the number of jobs that is generated by food manufacturers in our region. There are over 6,000 people directly and indirectly employed because of our food manufacturing in Bendigo. If there were an outbreak of disease at Hazeldene's, Hy-Line or KR Castlemaine, or at any of the companies that feed into these manufacturers, thousands of jobs would be at risk. That is why it is so important that we get serious about biosecurity.

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (17:05): I rise to speak on the Biosecurity Bill 2014. Having listened to the member for Bendigo and the member for Hunter, I would like to make a brief comment about their contributions. I would like to point out that the Labor Party were in government for six years, last time I checked—and that they had a seemingly endless bucket of taxpayer funds—and I would have considered that that was adequate time to put out this legislation. However, to give the member for Hunter his due, he has provided qualified support for the bill and I certainly thank him for that.

This is an incredibly important bill for our agricultural, forestry and fishery producers, and it aims to strike the correct balance between our trade obligations and, of course, unnecessary burdens on both our producers and our enforcement agents. In 2012-13, we had 16 million people arrive as international passengers, and there were 1.7 million sea cargo assignments. If you went back and spoke to the dairy producers of the 1960s and 1970s, I guarantee you none of them would have thought that we would be exporting fresh milk from Sydney to China by plane. World trade has changed substantially, and this bill puts in place what is required to
ensure that we move with it. There is still work to do. Clearly, there are more documents to write, and obviously this bill will be subject to continuous change as long as it is around. Biosecurity threats will continue to change over a long period of time.

But we have a great advantage here, in that Australia is an island—a great advantage. We are separated from our trading partners by a very large expanse of ocean. But it is also great disadvantage: such a large continent has a very open border, particularly with regard to the incursion of pests and disease.

Can you imagine an Australia that was free from foxes, or free from rabbits or rats? That is something that could have been achieved if some of our forefathers had had the foresight to consider just what damage these animals might do. To give you a bit of an idea, foxes in my area at the moment are diabolical for the loggerhead turtle, an endangered species which breeds in only two locations in the world—one of which is at Mon Repos Beach in Bundaberg. So bad has it become that we have brought in professional fox-hunters with dogs to try to sniff out their lairs to thin them out. The foxes get down on the beach; they dig out the turtle nests and eggs and destroy them.

The National Party was in Wodonga last week, of all places. I was walking through the streets of Wodonga in mid-afternoon with my National Party colleagues and, lo and behold, there was a rabbit having a feed in the middle of a roundabout, completely unconcerned about the passing traffic or us walking past. Rabbits are absolutely detrimental to our environment. They are an absolute disaster.

In 2013-2014, there was $53 billion worth of agricultural production. This is an incredibly important bill for our agricultural producers. We currently have no rabies in this country and at the moment there is no foot-and-mouth. I am someone who has been an agricultural producer for over a decade and who comes from a farming family—my parents actually still harvest almost 20 per cent of mill supply in the Bundaberg region with their harvesting contracting business. I was a canegrower myself for many years; I can tell you just how devastating it is to have a disease outbreak. I farmed during the orange rust outbreak; I farmed during the cane smut outbreak. There is nothing more disappointing than walking through your crop, which should be green and looking beautiful, and coming out the other side covered in orange. You were literally orange. It was just devastating. One of the fortunate things about orange rust is that it particularly affected just one variety of cane, which was Q124. Unfortunately about 50 per cent of the district was Q124; but over time you can get rid of it and you can survive. If 50 per cent of your crop is still able to be grown without damage then you are economically viable. However, when sugarcane smut broke out, it was a devastating disease. There were losses of up to 70 per cent. You literally have your crop reduced to a couple of sticks which are thin and black in colour with no green top; it simply does not grow. This is a disease which is incredibly communicable. It travels vast distances as a fungal spore; it is black in colour and just destroys the green top. As a grower, when the disease breaks out the decision you have to make is how you survive. Quite simply, many varieties are not smut resistant and that is the only option. The only alternative is to take out your entire crop and give your farm to the bank, so tough decisions have to be made. Those decisions include whether to take out new rotations and risk that you will produce something or to talk to your bank and extend your overdraft. These are the situations people find themselves in right now as a result of disease and pest incursions.
This bill is based on risk based systems. One of my concerns, and it has been one of my concerns for some time, is around the risk profile we use. We use the WTO risk calculator and, as someone who has used hundreds of different types of risk calculators, I have some concerns about that. However, that is a requirement under our WTO agreements. I congratulate the department of agriculture and those that do the assessment—they are definitely detailed.

There will be no fiscal impact. There will be a $6.9 million a year decrease in costs, in fact. But the most important thing is that the decisions based around this legislation, when we look at our potential for incursion, are based on science. They certainly cannot be based on political interference. This was recently seen with a risk assessment for ginger, which was incredibly difficult for growers in my region. However, fortunately we have looked at the science and the government has gone back to reassess that assessment. Hopefully that will give us a good outcome.

There is also a range of new enforcement options. They include the ability to issue a biosecurity control order, the ability to establish a biosecurity zone and the ability to act across jurisdictions. One of the most difficult things to do is cross state boundaries and still be able to enforce Commonwealth law. That will require people with enforcement powers in different areas.

This bill has been several years in the making. It is one of the most important bills we have on the table at the moment. Our nation is definitely reliant on agricultural production. And it is timely; look at the outbreak at the moment of the cucumber green mottle mosaic virus in the Northern Territory. This is a disease which has wiped out the melon crop in the Northern Territory. It has resulted in growers having to plough in their crops and burn them, never to use that land for melons again. It has cost some $65 million in the last 12 months from just one incursion. It looks like that has potentially come from seed; if that seed has spread across all growing regions—and my region in Hinkler is one of the largest producers of heavy vegetables including watermelons, rockmelons and honeydew—the impacts will be absolutely devastating for my community, which is doing it tough right now.

This is a bill which is designed to operate free of political interference. It is based on science, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (17:12): I also rise to speak on the Biosecurity Bill 2014 and the associated quarantine bills. We have heard many speakers today from both sides talk about the importance of keeping agriculture in Australia disease-free and why that is so important across a whole range of different industries and sectors. We have also talked a lot about the need to maintain our clean and green image; that is very important in terms of our future agricultural production. Indeed, those from this side of the House who have spoken have talked about the importance of the need for bipartisanship when it comes to these matters and the strong importance of biosecurity. As the shadow minister and member for Hunter said, one of the most important aspects that a government faces is how it manages biosecurity. While we have raised some of our concerns and criticisms, we have stressed from this side the need for bipartisanship in terms of being able to work together to make sure we have a biosecurity framework in place that is beneficial for our entire community.

This bill will effectively modernise the legislative framework and provide for the effective management of a broader range of biosecurity risks. It will also reduce the regulatory
complexity for both industry and government. These changes are important to ensure we have that very strong and robust agricultural sector. The three quarantine bills will ensure there is an appropriate legal structure to support the recovery of costs associated with indirect services under the biosecurity bill. These changes to our biosecurity framework are vitally important and it is for this reason that Labor first introduced an upgraded and modernised biosecurity bill in 2012.

As many speakers from this side have said, this bill before the parliament is essentially identical to and reflects Labor's initial bill. However—unfortunately and regretfully—the Abbott government has not continued to support a very important part of that original bill, the independent Inspector-General of Biosecurity. They have decided to give those powers to the minister instead. We raised the point that this was the wrong decision and called upon the current minister to reflect upon that, because we do feel that this position should be in place.

The primary objective of this bill is to manage biosecurity risk. This requires powers to identify, assess and manage biosecurity risks in relation to goods, conveyances and onshore pests and disease incursions. We certainly have heard of some of the incursions and devastation that they can bring. The overview of the bill is broadly divided into three distinct sections: firstly, operational chapters that support day-to-day biosecurity business; secondly, stand-alone chapters that support specialised biosecurity situations; and thirdly, general administrative chapters that support other necessary functions and powers.

Managing biosecurity is vitally important as it relates to the management of pests and disease entering Australia that could potentially cause harm to animals, plants, human health and the environment. That could have a damaging effect upon our economy as well. All of that could be quite devastating. That is why we keep reiterating the importance of managing biosecurity effectively. Essentially, this Biosecurity Bill will help sustain the integrity of our national environment and increase the productivity of Australia's agricultural, fishery and forestry industries, whilst protecting the health of Australians.

This bill is necessary for the ongoing challenges that a nation like Australia faces. As we have heard, the maintenance of a pest-free agricultural industry is so important, and that can only be achieved by making sure that we adhere to this very strong, modern, robust biosecurity framework. These issues are also very important in areas like mine—the north coast of New South Wales—where we have a very large variety of agricultural sectors that are always calling for a strong biosecurity framework. Very important industries like bananas, sugar and dairy—to name just a few of those—need to be protected by having in place a very strong framework. That is vitally important.

Our unique position in the world as a relatively pest-free environment—and I say 'relatively' pest and disease free—is indeed the envy of the world, and we must work hard to keep that. Our general health and wellbeing, the environment we live in and our native flora and fauna are all beneficiaries of successive and successful policies in this area. This hard-fought position has allowed our agricultural industry to leverage-off a very clean and green status, as we have heard many people talk about. This is giving Australian products a much needed advantage in an ever-competitive world, which is very important when we talk about the many free-trade agreements in place. We need to be focusing on that clean and green status. Quite rightly, our agricultural image to the world is not just clean and green but also of very high quality.
We have to maintain that for future growth to make sure that there is confidence in our agricultural sector and confidence in our very high standards of agricultural export industries. This is very important for a whole variety of reasons, particularly when we look to regional and rural economies and how much they depend upon maintaining strong agricultural sectors and jobs in these areas. It is also very important as demand increases, with many growing economies around the world looking to us and our food production and sourcing that. There is a variety of very important reasons why we have to maintain that.

It is also important to note that whilst the Commonwealth manages Australia's biosecurity at the border, biosecurity issues within the Australian territory, by and large, are managed by the states. The Biosecurity Bill would provide the Commonwealth with necessary powers if a biosecurity incursion crossed borders and different state approaches were hindering an effective response. There may be conditions when a nationwide approach is called upon, so it is certainly good to have that in place.

Australia's biosecurity management is regulated by the Quarantine Act 1908, and this bill replaces that. The need for a modernised, effective regulatory framework has never been more imperative in today's changing world; we need to manage our changing circumstances. We are seeing much larger passenger movement occur daily between continents, with the movement of millions of people, and where increased trades in goods are assisted by better, faster transport systems. With that change in circumstances we have to approach it differently, and we have to look at the challenges that are in front of us now in policing our biosecurity threats.

Whilst the Quarantine Act may have been effective in the past, in certain areas, it has been amended more than 50 times in reaction to changing circumstances and has become quite complex. Unfortunately, all of these minor changes have led to the creation of a highly complex set of legislation, which brings with it the inevitable difficulties of interpretation, and overlaps as well, which can create some difficulties. This calls for the modernisation of the bill.

It was the former Labor government that introduced the Biosecurity Bill 2012 to upgrade and modernise the legislation underpinning our biosecurity framework and to support the implementation of a risk based biosecurity intervention framework. This bill was introduced to parliament in November 2012 together with the Inspector-General of Biosecurity Bill, which was also in the 2012.

These bills were in response to the Nairn and Beale reviews and provided for the framework that replaced the previous Quarantine Act. Both bills were jointly referred to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee but subsequently lapsed. The reintroduction of the bill provides the strong framework that will enable the management of the risks in a very modern and responsive manner to enhance our capacity to manage those risks into the future.

I am concerned that the Abbott government has sat on this bill since coming into government and that there was no action sooner. The majority of the work on this bill was under undertaken by Labor in government. It is quite incredible that it has been almost two years that we have been waiting for these important Labor reforms to be adopted by the current government. The concern is that we may have been missing opportunities worldwide; we may have been missing opportunities to redefine and re-evaluate our framework. I suppose
it is a reflection of the chaos and debacle that we have seen, but it has taken a long time to get here.

I do have concerns that sometimes the Abbott government has not been properly focusing on those challenges and opportunities facing the agricultural sector. We certainly see this reflected in the long awaited white paper, which has been promised but we have not seen. In fact, prior to the election the now Prime Minister and then opposition leader promised that his government would deliver the white paper within 12 months of office. I will quote from The Coalition's Policy for a Competitive Agricultural Sector from August 2013, which says:

The White Paper will be conducted by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and will report within 12 months. Our White Paper will also provide a clear, well-defined and transparent strategic approach to ensure the agriculture sector remains a significant contributor to the Australian economy and local communities.

We have seen that that has not happened—another broken promise. It is a broken promise that could potentially have quite serious consequences.

The fact is the agricultural sector deserves to know when the Abbott government will be delivering upon this white paper. We know that the Prime Minister's website is stating that it is set now for completion in 2015, but there is no specific date. So we have some real concerns about that. What the sector needs is to have clear policy, strategic guidance and direction from the Abbott government at a time of great change and of many challenges for them. But they are not getting that. So it is a concern, and another broken promise. Certainly, many on this side of the House have reiterated how we need to have that white paper there and how there have been massive delays. It is really disappointing for those sectors in relation to agriculture, fisheries and forestry—they are all looking for that guidance.

Of course, adding to this frustration are delays caused by many of the cuts the Abbott government has made to the biosecurity budget—including the cuts to the CSIRO, which, of course, limits their research capacity. There are a number of concerns about many of the unfair budget cuts that have occurred within the agricultural sector and the impacts of that generally, right across the area. We look at the cuts to Landcare as well—over $480 million to Landcare. Also, there were $80 million in cuts to Cooperative Research Centres; over $146 million to the CSIRO, which would cost about 500 jobs; $11 million to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation; and the more than $6 million from the scrapping of the National Water Commission. So we have had all of these cuts and have not seen the white paper. There is a lot of concern within the agricultural community about this government's inaction when it comes to those areas and its severe funding cuts.

I did find the previous speakers very interesting—like the member for Hinkler, who outlined some of the very serious concerns within his electorate. Yet, at the same time, he and other members of the National Party sit by whilst the agriculture minister brings about all these massive cuts to that area. They are a party to those massive cuts that are really harming so many of our regional and rural communities. In fact, their minister, the member of the National Party, is the one who is making those cuts, and they are assisting him. They come in here and talk about all of the challenges that they face, when they should be going back to their communities and talking about how they, as the National Party as part of the government, are the ones making these decisions that are harming regional and rural communities—and harming them quite severely.
We also had the Abbott government promising to make agriculture one of the five pillars of the economy. But, as I have said, we are yet to see their plan for how they will achieve this. That is particularly disappointing, as I have said, because we do want to see this in place. The government should be focusing on the growing opportunities for the agricultural sector. That is what they should be focusing on, not their own infighting. There is so much to be done in this field. There are so many areas that have to be delivered upon, because there are so many opportunities for agriculture sectors domestically and internationally in relation to the free trade agreements, in relation to growing rural and regional economies, and in relation to employment growth. But we need a government that is going to be focusing on that. And it does not, obviously, appear to be happening. It is disappointing for all of those sectors, because this should be one of the government's highest priorities. I said at the beginning that, without a doubt, making sure we have that robust sector should be right at the top of their list in terms of the action that they take. With all the chaos and disunity, it does not seem to have been there. Our clean, green and safe image is the agricultural sector's greatest advantage. It really keeps our competitive edge there. That is why this bill is of such incredibly critical importance.

As I have said, we have raised some of our concerns about this bill, particularly the parts in relation to the need for the Inspector-General of Biosecurity—and I would ask that the minister certainly take that into consideration. But as others on this side have stressed—and, indeed, the shadow minister, the member for Hunter, has said—we support this bill. We believe it is important to have a bipartisan support when it comes to any of the opportunities for our agricultural sector. But we would like the minister and the government to take onboard some of the concerns that we have had, because we just cannot be missing some of those worldwide opportunities that are there. We need to have that in place, and we do support it, because we do have to have a very strong and robust biosecurity framework.

**Mr RANDALL** (Canning (17:27)): I am pleased to speak on the Biosecurity Bill 2014 as a cognate bill. As the previous speakers mentioned, this is a bill that is replacing a bill that is almost 100 years old; it was enacted in 1908. There is no doubt of the importance of ensuring the sustainability of Australia's biosecurity, particularly as Australia moves forward into a new era. The proposed legislation protects a range of stakeholders—agricultural stakeholders, businesses and every single individual who enjoys a life relatively free from a range of exotic diseases. These amendments are critically important to ensure that legislation is current and equipped to cope with modern challenges faced by modern Australia.

The coalition seeks to make improvements in four key ways. They are protecting our agricultural industry, increasing efficiency, improving compliance, and further protecting the Australian people from public health risks. By maintaining and improving current protections, we will be ensuring that Australia stays competitive in the current export market while also providing a simpler, more effective way of doing business with our import market. We want to be able provide a safety net for all Australians in the event of a communicable disease outbreak, such as the Ebola pandemic that was witnessed last year. We also want to ensure that compliance with biosecurity measures is as high as possible. So we are creating a number of tools that can be used to assess applications, administer legislation and provide for penalties that reflect the risks Australia is exposed to.
Ongoing management of biosecurity risks, including that of human disease, is not only an environmental concern but also an economic requirement. This is highlighted by the fact that, in 2013-14, the gross value of Australian production to the Australian economy was some $53 billion.

In my electorate of Canning, I have had the pleasure of working with a group called HOIG, the Hills Orchard Improvement Group. The organisation represent $40 million worth of farmgate industry in the Perth Hills, in Western Australia. I have spoken a number of times in this parliament about HOIG and the work that they do both in and out of my electorate, but I feel as if I need to mention them once more to our Minister for Agriculture, because I do not think he has still got it in relation to HOIG. I just want to remind him that they would also benefit from improved biosecurity measures, particularly against Mediterranean fruit fly, known scientifically as *Ceratitis capitata*.

Once upon a time, they had an efficient and effective protection to adopt called fenthion, which eradicated the Medfly from larvae. However, a series of unfortunate decisions led to this protection being banned due to concerns around the safety of its usage. The APVMA, or Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, felt that a 30-year-old report containing questionable data at best—in fact, back to the 1970s, as I understand—was enough to ban the use of fenthion, which was the only mechanism to stop the Mediterranean fruit fly. That was all because the APVMA does not, and is not required to, consider studies undertaken by other international bodies. This was the best it could source. This was looked at during the Senate inquiry, and the Senate inquiry found that there was no valid reason to ban fenthion, because there was no example anywhere in Australia or the world which justified that.

The disappointing fact of the matter is that they still saw fit to import fruit from overseas sources that use fenthion as a matter of course. This seems to contradict the APVMA’s argument that fenthion, used in low dosages to prevent Medfly, poses a substantial enough risk to the consumer that it is justified in causing such havoc to the livelihood of my constituents who grow pome and stone fruit for domestic and international consumption. This is particularly true when considering the fact that Vietnam has since stopped issuing import permits for fresh Australian fruit, much as Japan did with Australian blueberries in 2011. The spokesman for HOIG, Brett DelSimone, in my electorate, has informed me that this decision could effectively close the gate on this $40 million worth of exports. I am certain that growers in my electorate would rather have enjoyed the benefit of ensuring their own biosecurity through the very moderate use of fenthion spray.

It has already been stated by the minister that Australians enjoyed the company of 16 million international passengers during the 2013-14 year. Also in my electorate of Canning, I am fortunate enough to have the Mandurah and Peel region, an area which provides so many examples of what makes Western Australia such a unique place to live. It is referred to by the Peel Development Commission as one of the fastest-growing regions in WA, and it is expected to have a population of some 300,000 people by 2050. In 2013, approximately two million people embarked on a day trip to the Peel region. I would imagine that, with the increasing accessibility of the area, this number will continue to grow. By speaking in support of strengthening biosecurity measures, I hope to continue to assist in protecting not only the beautiful environment and the local fauna but also the approximately 113,000 people who
currently call Peel home. Around 65 per cent of this number resides within the boundary of
the City of Mandurah itself.

Much of the current legislative framework was established in a very different society that
faced exceptionally different challenges. I am talking about the historical legislation. It was
developed in a time where international travel was so arduous that it was sometimes only
undertaken once in a person's lifetime. The import-export market was virtually nonexistent.
Communicable diseases that have since been mostly eradicated through immunisation and the
Quarantine Act were at the forefront of policymakers' minds, and the entire population of
Australia was just under double that of Western Australia's present population.

This is not to undervalue the current act. It has served us well for an exceptionally long
time and has been used as the framework to establish Australia's current unique biosecurity
status. This is not a case of replacing something that is broken; it is a case of updating
something that will increasingly struggle to keep up with modern demands—in other words,
modernising it. The bill is an update that takes into account modern technology and reflects
the capabilities of that technology.

Almost 50 amendments over the course of the act's lifetime mean that the legislation has
become difficult and incompatible with global demands. Overlapping provisions and powers
have made the Quarantine Act and its accompanying regulations unnecessarily very
complicated to administer. A more streamlined approach, as this bill has, is needed.

This bill has been designed to manage biosecurity risks, including those of human diseases,
which may enter or emerge in Australian territory and to prevent their establishment or spread
in Australian territory. This bill is the culmination of 100 years of experience and extensive
consultation with a wide range of stakeholders such as primary producers, importers,
exporters, state and territory governments, environmental groups, the general public and our
international trading partners. They are all having an input. This bill seeks to ensure that
legislation is clear and laid out in a way that makes provisions easy to find. This allows for
clear definition of the role of those being regulated as well as the roles of those administering
the regulations.

This is what the coalition is all about: streamlined processes, increased efficiency and
cutting away unnecessary red tape, as is always called for. This is an example of how we are
doing it. This bill is a reflection of those principles. It seeks to reduce the impact of regulation
while still achieving the best outcomes for the future of our biosecurity. Estimates show that
deregulation can save up to something like $6.9 million a year, just in those small areas. This
is done by reducing unnecessary duplication and allowing businesses to come to a single
arrangement with the Department of Agriculture in the management of biosecurity risks. The
current system requires a single business to enter into multiple arrangements with the
Department of Agriculture. To remedy this, there are provisions for a broader range of
activities allowed under one agreement with the department—so not what we experience now.

Presently the act prevents goods, despite not posing a biosecurity risk, from being unloaded
automatically when they arrive in Australia. In the new biosecurity bill, unnecessary delays
for importers are avoided by allowing a business to apply for a standard permission of entry
into Australia ports only when it is known that goods being transported do not pose a threat to
Australian biosecurity. This is another unnecessary delay which has been avoided in the day-
to-day operation of business. So rather than sitting on the ports, we can actually get an
arrangement in place on goods that we know, or have a precedent almost, are coming into this country without any problems.

As is the case with any legislation, its level of success is directly proportional to its level of compliance. This bill includes a number of arrangements that allow effective and efficient targeting of those who do not comply with biosecurity arrangements. One of the many ways this is done is by applying a fit and proper person test, taking into account an applicant's or business's history of compliance and whether any known business associates have breached this compliance at any time.

Biosecurity is everyone's responsibility, and the measures in this bill reflect that. The bill also allows the Commonwealth to exercise penalties based on the level of risk that Australia was exposed to. Penalties include, but are not limited to, infringement notices, enforceable undertakings, or civil or criminal proceedings. It is very well known that prevention is better than cure. By having provisions which allow biosecurity officers to enter premises and manage an identifiable risk, potential issues are mitigated before they cause irreversible damage to the Australian environment, economy and/or its citizens.

Despite the prevalence of the medfly, which I mentioned earlier, within my electorate, there are many pests and diseases that are quite common around the world but are absent within Australia's borders. As the only registered beekeeper in this parliament, I want to talk about the Varroa mite. It has not reached Australia, and we need to continue to make sure that does not happen. This is an example of what I am talking about today. This bill protects this status, which will hopefully maximise Australia's agricultural output. There are also provisions for a wider range of pests and diseases already in Australia, such as medfly, again, which poses threats to industry, our environment and our agricultural produce. The bill extends existing powers, in conjunction with current arrangements with state governments, so that these pests can be effectively managed.

Provisions regarding communicable diseases take into account individual liberties as well as the responsibility of the government to ensure all risks to the greater population are minimised. The bill ensures that the management of any risks also reflects Australia's international obligations. While I am sure we all hope that these provisions are rarely needed, no-one can argue against the importance of such provisions in this day and age where venturing overseas has never been easier.

In conclusion, as I have stated previously, this is simply a case of making sure the legislation can be modernised. Our friends in the opposition, as we know, would be jumping for joy, as this is one of the few pieces of legislation that is not being fixed due to their need to regulate and legislate. We know that we have bipartisan support. It makes the good better. The purpose is clarity, efficiency and effectiveness. In encouraging compliance, we create a safer environment for our agricultural industry, our unique environment and the broader community, as I have mentioned.

This legislation makes it clear to those who are bound by it what is expected of them and what biosecurity officers are authorised to do. It also makes penalties fairer by ensuring that the punishment fits the crime and that the level of risk is reflected in all sanctions. The bill ensures that individual rights are respected when managing human disease but also that unnecessary risk is not tolerated.
I cannot stress the importance of this legislation enough in terms of Australia being seen with its clean, green image. When I was on a delegation to Japan and Korea, Australia is seen as a country of great health, and we are lauded for our clean status. Just to give you an example: in the hotels of Japan and Korea they describe Australian beef as 'free range', because they are out in the paddocks rather than in feedlots. They see it as a big plus for us, and we need to maintain this positive image in the light of all the competition that we are getting from everyone else.

We do not need another medfly in this country or, dare I say, a cane toad. We do not want an outbreak of Ebola, bird flu or swine flu on Australian soil, or foot-and-mouth disease or anything like that—equine influenza for our race horses, those sorts of things. Australia has been too well quarantined to take a punt on those issues.

We want the freedom to travel. We want our agricultural industry to be competitive, successful and the best. This is why the coalition seeks to pass this biosecurity bill and its accompanying amendments. I recommend the bill to the House.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (17:42): As a farmer, as well as a member of parliament, I am particularly pleased to speak on the Biosecurity Bill 2014 today. I really understand how important biosecurity is. It is vitally important—something I am passionate about defending. I have spoken repeatedly in this House about the need to protect Australia’s environmental and agricultural resources. It is a priority for this government. However, I want to raise a personal note of caution and concern about the status of biosecurity in recent years and to look at how changes to the definitions we use have changed the way we manage the process.

Since 1908 we have had a quarantine act. The word 'quarantine' derives from a Latin and later Italian reference to 'forty days'—the period of time one spent in isolation. Today its meaning is much broader, and Webster's dictionary describes it as:

- the period of time during which a person or animal that has a disease or that might have a disease is kept away from others to prevent the disease from spreading
- the situation of being kept away from others to prevent a disease from spreading

I would ask members to take note of the words 'prevent the disease from spreading'. Today we are debating the replacement of the Quarantine Act with the Biosecurity Bill. The explanatory memorandum of this bill says the following:

The Biosecurity Bill 2014 will provide the primary legislative means and a modern regulatory framework for the Australian government to manage the risks of pests and diseases entering Australian territory and causing harm to animal, plant and human health, the environment and the economy.

The bill is designed to manage biosecurity risks, including the risk of listed human diseases entering Australian territory or emerging and establishing themselves or spreading in Australian territory or a part of Australian territory. The bill will also enable the management of risks relating to ballast water and sediment, and biosecurity emergencies. Quarantine is designed to prevent the spread of a disease, of a plant or of an invasive animal species. It has an authoritative ring that demands action to prevent incursion. The modern meaning of biosecurity is to 'manage the risk' of such incursion. This alone suggests a downgrading of the target from a measurable standard of action to a qualitative opinion of risk. Please note the difference.
Regional Australia, which is where I live and work as many in our farming sector do, and especially our agricultural sector have long been concerned about the level of protection given our environmental and agricultural assets. It is something I have heard a lot about for a lot of the years that I have been a farmer.

The Beale quarantine and biosecurity review that was commissioned by the previous Labor government called for hundreds of millions to be spent on AQIS and quarantine annually to provide proper real protection to our nation's borders. But in government Labor failed to act, except to spend two and a half years after its release running it down and stripping out its assets.

Australian agricultural and food producers rely on our clean image and high quality produce to find markets and to retain markets. Agricultural and food production in this country drives $155 billion a year in economic production, generating around 1.6 million Australian jobs and $32 billion a year in farm exports. And it is happening out in regional Australia.

Cheaper foreign food products are often underpinned by cheap labour or low quality control. That means our producers rely on the perception of higher quality, safety and of an ethical reputation. Around the world Australian produced food is regarded as safe, clean and high quality, and it is essential that we maintain that reputation.

Australian farmers and food manufacturers are some of the best in the world and they know that our greatest marketing and health asset is our virtual disease free status, and it is too valuable to lose. As I said, it is a food safety issue also. This is particularly important in this debate because of the cost advantage that most of our competitors get, especially on labour. Australian producers and manufacturers have to rely on quality and safety to compete effectively in the marketplace, be that domestic or international. In addition, Australia's status as a premium international tourist destination makes vigilance in pest and disease protection paramount. Our native plants, animals and ecosystems are a major part of the attraction that brings tourists here and brings them back, and protecting them should be a government priority.

It should be noted by the parliament that the previous Labor government had a poor record of defending Australia's borders and maintaining our quarantine and biosecurity. Labor consistently stripped funding and personnel from all of the Commonwealth law and border enforcement agencies. This included: over $1 million from the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity; 750 staff cut from Customs from 2009-10; $64.1 million cut from Customs in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 budgets; $264.5 million and 97 staff cut from the Australian Federal Police; $22.2 million and 144 staff cut from the Australian Crime Commission; $15.2 million and 35 staff cut from Austrac; $8.7 million cut from CrimTrac; and $1.2 million cut from Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity. Labor's 2009 federal budget also slashed $58.1 million from the quarantine and biosecurity budgets, reducing the inspections of arriving passengers and cargo and leading to the loss of 125 jobs.

Veterinarians, scientists and other experts in the field know that if we have a poor focus on biosecurity and border protection, the next major outbreak of an industry-crippling exotic disease or foreign pest or weed incursion is not a matter of if, but when. They know this, because the aim of Biosecurity Australia has too often been not to prevent the entry of exotic diseases and pests, but instead to calculate and minimize the risk of diseases or pests entering
with other products. This simple statement means that it becomes a numbers game—and this bothers me very much as a farmer in this nation.

Even with low statistical risk, when enough products are imported a breakdown will eventually occur. The maths makes it inevitable. So we need to constantly question the balance of prevention of incursion with management of risk. In the modern trade environment, certainty of border protection has become a thing of the past. There is no such thing as guaranteed quarantine. And because Australia is a massive exporter of primary produce we need to recognise, acknowledge and understand why this is so.

However, it is also important not to give up our natural environmental and agricultural advantages that our relative disease-free and pest-free status provide. There is no dollar amount that can quantify these. We have an obligation to ensure prevention where possible—and I for one would feel more secure if Biosecurity Australia had this at the forefront of their policy and action agenda.

This bill has taken some time to get here. The Biosecurity Bill was first introduced in 2012, referred to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee and lapsed when parliament was prorogued. There were areas of concern identified during that inquiry that have been addressed in the new legislation.

One great interest is that of regional differences of biosecurity status. This is of particular importance to Western Australia and my electorate in the south-west. Many pests and diseases found elsewhere are not found in my region, and it is essential that regional exclusion remains a key focus of governments both state and federal. The issue of regional differences was raised by a number of stakeholders during consultation on the 2012 bill. Some stakeholders considered that the original legislation did not include appropriate consideration of regional differences during risk analysis processes. This issue was further explored during consultation on the IRA examination. To address concerns, the provisions in the Biosecurity Bill 2014 have been strengthened to include a note in the provisions for conducting biosecurity import risk analyses, which explicitly states that the department can and will consider areas of different pest or disease status when conducting IRAs under the Biosecurity Bill 2014.

Australia does not use the words 'regional difference' in legislation, because it is not a term defined in relevant international agreements or standards. The Biosecurity Bill 2014 uses the words 'part of Australian territory' to enable the important consideration of 'regional differences'. This wording has been included in addition to the definition of biosecurity risk, which is defined as: 'The likelihood of a disease or pest: entering Australian territory or a part of Australian territory or; establishing itself or spreading in Australian territory or a part of Australian territory'.

As I said when I started, all of us who are engaged in the primary sector—in farming, in food manufacturing, in exporting—understand the opportunities that will arise out of the free trade agreements. But a key part of that opportunity is and will remain a very vigilant approach to biosecurity, which is why I will continue to take a direct interest in this issue.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (17:54): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on this legislation. I note that I am following two Western Australians. I note the member for Franklin is in the chamber. Whilst we sometimes have had differences with Western Australians, in this area I think we do have similarities. Western Australia is divided from much of mainland Australia...
by the Nullarbor, as Tasmania is separated from mainland Australia by Bass Strait. Therefore, the concept of all of the things that biosecurity brings to our nation in terms of the image and the reputation that Australia rightly enjoys in terms of being a producer of things clean and green—our pest-free status—is enhanced somewhat by those regional differences that the member for Forrest was highlighting. It truly is our nation's competitive advantage. It is what distinguishes us. We are an island—indeed, in the case of Tasmania, an island within an island. That gives us a competitive advantage in terms of biosecurity and our capacity to market our products to countries around the world. It is important, and that is why this legislation is so significant.

I note that this bill was introduced into parliament in 2012 but was subsequently referred to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee, and that committee was still making its findings when the election of 2013 occurred. I think there is acknowledgment on both sides of the House as to the importance of this legislation. That is why the inquiry received 80 submissions from a range of different stakeholders. In large measure, the concerns that were raised have been addressed.

In the case of Tasmania, our reputation is absolutely critical to where we stand and the quality of the food that we produce. It is doubtful that Australia will ever be—as is sometimes misleadingly said—a food bowl for Asia. That would be a gross exaggeration, and something that is far beyond our capacity. We are really a minion in terms of what we actually produce and consumption—even in a large country, like China for example. If Australia is perhaps the supermarket, Tasmania perhaps could better be described as the delicatessen part of that supermarket. It truly is the very best of what we are able to do.

I note recently the 'Restaurant Australia' campaign, which is promoting Australia as not only a travel destination but also a food destination. Many tourists that come to our shores are surprised by the quality of the food here. Tasmania was chosen as the feature for the 'Restaurant Australia' presentation that highlighted food from all around Australia, and particularly from my home state of Tasmania.

Biosecurity is particularly important not only to our nation—also particularly within some of the sectors where my state of Tasmania has a real competitive advantage; one of those is the salmon industry. Again I note the member for Franklin in her electorate—as in the member for Braddon's electorate and also in my electorate—these are important businesses. They are globally competitive businesses. They are very much part of the brand that makes Tasmania very special. There are not too many Australians that would not have enjoyed the quality of Tasmanian salmon. It is highlighted at the very top end of the restaurant trade. For example, Tetsuya's restaurant in Sydney has made an art form of Tasmanian ocean trout, which has become his signature dish.

Biosecurity is critical in this sector. It is critically important. The aquaculture and salmon industries in both Chile and Norway in recent times have been all but wiped out through disease incursions. There are challenges that face the aquaculture industry in Tasmania. We think of Tasmania as being an island to the south but, if you look at where salmon is produced in the Northern Hemisphere, the equivalent latitude would be Heard Island in the Southern Hemisphere. It is a unique business in Australia that produces the quantity and the quality of salmon in largely what is a Mediterranean environment. It is critical also that we maintain the biosecurity of that sector. It is so important to our state.
The commitment to biosecurity has allowed Australia and particularly Tasmania to protect our unique natural habitat but also the health of our people while at the same time maintaining an advantage in primary industries. We cannot take this status for granted at all. I have mentioned the salmon industry but it is true also in the case of apples. There are clearly risks, and they were identified through biosecurity incursions after apples from New Zealand were allowed to be imported into Australia. Once the testing started it was shown that the processes that they had put in place were in fact inadequate and unable to guarantee the safety of those apples being imported into Australia.

A number of global trends highlight a significant change and the growing complexity relating to biosecurity challenges pointing towards a future where existing biosecurity processes may not be sufficient. I refer to the CSIRO report titled *Australia's biosecurity future*. I want to make a couple of points out of that very worthwhile report. One relates to obviously something we all understand. The number of international tourist movements that occur around the world—and that is true also in Australia—is continuing to increase. It is true of the vessels and the trade that we see in a very much globalised world.

The figure that struck me recently was that, in 2013, 100 million Chinese people left China to travel for pleasure. Admittedly, the majority of them went to places like Hong Kong and Macau. Less than one per cent of those Chinese tourists chose Australia as a destination. That 700,000 or thereabouts is predicted to double by 2020. I think that not only is a very good illustration of the communicable disease risks—they may be able to be moved much more easily than they once were—but highlights the infrastructure challenges that this country has in terms of bringing that increasing and large volume of tourists into Australia. That is why I am very pleased to see the government has invested a record amount of money in infrastructure. I welcomed the announcement in Townsville recently, as I welcomed the announcement of the Hobart airport being upgraded—with a $38 million contribution in this year's budget.

Indeed there is also the challenge we have in urban populations. I guess those living in the urban centres around Australia and indeed all around the world are now more than two generations away from the family farm. I guess that that disconnection from primary industries sees demand for a whole range of different products. That may not have been the case in the past.

Australia's economy, its people and the environment benefit significantly from a strong biosecurity system. Australia's unique pest and disease status helps to protect our way of life, including our environment, human health, as we have mentioned, and the wellbeing of our domestic plants and animals. This unique status means that our agriculture industries, our environment and communities remain free of many pests and diseases found elsewhere, giving Australia a real competitive advantage in export markets. This is true absolutely in Tasmania and even in respect of mainland Australia. For example, cherries are able to be exported to the Japanese market. The phytosanitary and the processes that are put in in terms of managing those disease risks are such that Japan is happy to accept cherries from Tasmania. This is an important and valuable industry.

Australia's biosecurity risks have changed significantly since the Quarantine Act, which this Biosecurity Bill intends to replace, was first drafted more than a century ago. In the intervening 100 years there have been more than 50 amendments to that legislation. This new
bill I think more accurately reflects the reality of the world we live in, the goods and products that are traded and the increased movement of people in different modes of transport. Shifting global demands, growing passenger and trade volumes, increasing imports from a growing number of countries, and new air and sea craft technology have all contributed to a new and challenging biosecurity environment.

Science plays an important role in the work that the department of agriculture does. It is the foundation of productive, competitive and sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries. The department has embedded within it a wealth of scientific expertise which is generally readily accessible.

The regional differences within Australia are important. They have been considered in the submissions that were received and have been, I think, to large measure appropriately considered within the drafting of this bill. As I mentioned before, perhaps nowhere more than in Western Australia and certainly Tasmania, we appreciate the benefits that come from the isolation that we both enjoy. Of course it presents challenges from time to time in getting goods to market in a cost-effective way, not least of all across the most expensive piece of water perhaps in the world—that is, Bass Strait. That is a challenge for us and something that I am committed to improving.

The benefits that our state enjoys in terms of market access are not inconsiderable and are very much part of the brand and the reputation that Tasmania and Tasmanian agricultural producers enjoy, whether it be cherries, salmon, red meat or horticultural products in terms of berries and other things—even in the case of wool, an industry that I was involved in for many years. The quality and biosecurity status of wool from Australia are well recognised. We have a reputation for safe and high-quality food—something that we should at all times be aware of and be diligent in making sure that we continue to protect.

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (18:09): I rise today in support of the Biosecurity Bill 2014 together with the package of supportive bills relating to biosecurity and quarantine. This bill replaces the original act introduced to this parliament in 1908, over 100 years ago. I think it is fair to say it is well and truly time for a dust off, rethink and rework. On the enormity of the task, I would like to congratulate the member for New England, the Minister for Agriculture, and the CSIRO for their focus on our nation's biosecurity.

Late last year, while releasing a green paper on agricultural competitiveness, the minister said that biosecurity presented 'the greatest risk to the future of Australian agriculture' and that 'investment in our biosecurity should never be compromised'. I could not agree more. Being a continent island we have a wonderful natural barrier of protection to this land but it is also one of our greatest threats. At the heart of this 605 page bill is a plan for risk management and preventing risks to human health, not to mention a plan to protect Australian industry, especially the ongoing viability of agriculture, and in turn securing our food production.

European settlement has seen nature send warning salvos across our bow loud and clear. In the initial years of colonisation it was the very coughs and colds our convicts brought to Australia from England. The then isolated Indigenous population had not been exposed to anything like this and on some communities the impact was devastating. Then there were the outbreaks and people were quarantined for fear of all kinds of harmful and deadly diseases, including leprosy. But biosecurity encompasses other outbreaks, often because of our own stupidity and lack of research. Perhaps most notably was the ill-fated attempt by the Bureau of
Sugar Experimentation Station to control the Frenchi beetle, a pest in sugar cane crops, by introducing cane toads. That was in 1935. Eighty years later they have spread south to New South Wales and west across the top half of the continent, seriously threatening local flora, fauna and even humans with their poison.

Almost as foolhardy was the release of 24 rabbits by Thomas Austin in 1859 from Victoria. That release allowed the country to be overrun by rabbits in plague populations. The damage they caused is almost immeasurable—from soil erosion to the destruction of vegetation, not to mention the harm done to our native wildlife. It ran pretty much out of control until the 1950s when myxomatosis was introduced as a control and then, more recently, the calicivirus. Nonetheless, we still have a rabbit problem. Then there was the prickly pear. Imported in the 19th century, the cactus was originally thought to be a good biological agricultural fence. That was until the plant went feral. A South American moth, introduced in 1925, finally brought the prickly pear under control. Most recently there has been an issue of fire ants finding their way to Australia by container ship. Recent outbreaks around Botany threaten all regions of Sydney, including my electorate of Lindsay. The point is we must forever be vigilant to keep our country clean and free from pests and diseases.

My electorate of Lindsay is home to communities such as Agnes Banks, Llandilo, Castlereagh and Mulgoa—the north and south wings of my electorate. These areas are agricultural lands based around the Nepean River and are also home to some of our nation's most esteemed equine studs, which enjoy great success on both the international and national stages. Local heritage estates like Fernhill, once home to Sir Henry Parkes and the Cox family, is where the current owners work hard towards a dream of hosting international showjumping events in our region—not to mention their wonderfully successful picnic race days.

To the north of the Lindsay electorate is Castlereagh and Agnes Banks, home to spectacular thoroughbred properties, like Bart Cummings' Princes farm, Godolphin or Tyreel, and home to some of our nation's greatest thoroughbreds, like Melbourne Cup champion Saintly. A few years ago, in 2007, this community, alongside much of our equine community, faced an epidemic of equine flu that cut through the area like a rampant bushfire. You see, the first case of horse flu in Australia was confirmed in a stallion at Eastern Creek, also in Western Sydney. That stallion was in quarantine after arriving from Japan. Despite 60 horses at the Eastern Creek and Spotswood quarantine stations being kept in lockdown, the equine flu still escaped. The flu could be caught via airborne particles. Worse still, it could travel kilometres on the wind, affecting horse studs suburbs away. All in all 47,000 horses would test positive to the disease across nearly 6,000 properties through New South Wales and Queensland. Seeing what my own animal, my own horse, went through is not something I would wish upon my worst enemy. It was awful and it was distressing. My horse got through the ordeal. I am very lucky. Fonteyn was very young at the time, but she did have youth on her side. Older and more mature horses were not so lucky and did not survive this outbreak.

In an inquiry, former judge Ian Callinan, who investigated the issue, described our quarantine system as 'inefficient, underfunded and lacking due diligence'. Some important changes were made in the wake of Judge Callinan's findings, but the basic century-old legislation remained in place despite a mammoth operation: 50,000 horses had to be vaccinated, 132,000 lab tests had to be carried out and 16,000 movement permits had to be
issued. So many equine based businesses like self-employed tradesmen—farriers, horse dentists, vet clinics—endured economic hardship and some would never recover. My good friends Lyn and Michael White, of Castlereagh Feeds, were faced with an economic threat to their business, hence having to diversify their business into other forms of stock feed.

I go further. Lindsay is home to a whole range of other business in the agriculture space, particularly poultry and egg farms. There are businesses in Lindsay like Pirovic Enterprises, custodian to around 750,000 birds, which is one of the largest independent operators of poultry and egg production in Australia. As recently as 2013, and even into last year, businesses like this were threatened by avian influenza outbreaks found around Young. There were estimates around at the time that the loss of chicken stocks were so severe they were pushing up the price of eggs by as much as 20 per cent. As it was, egg production was cut in New South Wales by 12 per cent. Had that flu spread to my electorate, the local industry could have been absolutely decimated. That is because Pirovic farms in my electorate produce more than 60,000 eggs per day. It is a vulnerable industry. It is a vulnerable business, I might add, that directly employs 130 people and indirectly provides so many more jobs to people in Western Sydney.

We must protect our food security. Egg production is one of the most efficient means of protein production. It is essential our biosecurity laws are up to date and the very best they can be so that every protection possible is given to essential food producing industries like egg production. When I speak to people like family business owner Franco Pirovic, he tells me this legislation is a good and solid start. He says this legislation will help tighten border controls and take into account the massive traffic numbers at these points. He says this legislation will streamline the processes should the worst happen, and that gives everybody more certainty. He also says the legislation provides a springboard for the government to start looking at new biosecurity battlegrounds, what he calls the 'post border controls', because people like Franco see serious vulnerabilities.

As consumer demand is pushing industries like his away from battery egg production to free range, animal vulnerability to diseases rise. It is a simple factor of having less control over the animal's cleanliness and is a more difficult operation to quickly quarantine—especially when diseases can quickly travel several kilometres once airborne. And that is not good when you are an industry trying to keep bird flu and other diseases like Newcastle disease out. On Franco's figures, there are around 17 million commercial laying hens across Australia, but at least they have voluntary industry codes. However, that push to be green and organic, and the resurgence in unregulated backyard chicken farms, means often these farms have less than 10 chickens and are not part of any voluntary code or system. In fact, as Franco points out, the numbers are as high as 4.2 million backyard chickens being housed across Australia and these have the potential to become a big and growing issue. And with hens being bought and sold without regulation, many birds are not even getting basic vaccinations, which is a potential risk to an entire industry that is already vulnerable. It may be down the track, but there is a growing case to register pets and backyard birds in the same way we register cats and dogs. Further, domestic birds may need to have basic flu vaccinations in order to be bought and sold.

This legislation forms a modern framework where these ideas can be looked at and further legislated down the track—legislation that defends country, wildlife and, most importantly,
our food security. But Lindsay supports other agricultural enterprises too. We are home to vegetable farms in Londonderry and mushroom enterprises in our mountain foothills. In fact, mushrooms from the electorate of Lindsay account for more than 20 per cent of our nation's mushroom supply. Further, there are boutique wineries, saki manufacturers and important recreational fishing areas along the Nepean River. The point is biosecurity affects us all.

On the ground, parts of my electorate are earmarked for major freight interchange and holding facilities, potentially bringing issues, once faced by our ports, straight to the heart of Western Sydney. This bill is equipped to meet the challenges of modern trade and travel logistics. Today the Department of Agriculture is annually clearing 16 million arrival passengers, 186 million international mail items and 1.7 million sea cargo consignments as well as 26 million air cargo consignments. Those who wrote the old bill in 1908 could never have envisaged these numbers—not to mention the advancement of air travel that has made our world all the smaller and more accessible. Container vessels of today would have been almost inconceivable to the authors of the original bill.

The science and research communities in my area will have more certainty from this bill, as the sector grows with major transporting hubs being planned for the region. There is a role in all of this for Australia to lead the world, and proudly the people of Western Sydney can lead the charge. Macarthur, the electorate directly to the south of Lindsay, is named after John Macarthur—the father of the merino sheep industry. The merino is the sheep often credited with establishing Australia's export market, leading to the coining of the phrase 'an economy riding on the sheep's back.' Today we as a region look to the future of this innovative area. We look to how we can grow further. We are excited about investments by companies like Baiada, who have a 256 hectare property to the south of my electorate, where they are looking to develop a national food science and research laboratory. We also have organisations like the VIVID Centre in Penrith, which is part of Virbac. They are doing some of the most exciting research into animal health, and they are also manufacturing their products.

I support this bill. The bill is important for our nation's future, it is important for our food security and it is important for all Australians.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (18:23): Australia has an enviable reputation around the globe as a place which is free of many of the most harmful agricultural diseases. We do have our own range of unique circumstances but, as history has shown, the worst threats to Australia have been introduced. Rabbits, cane toads, foxes and feral pigs are obvious examples. Other introduced plant species are prickly pear cactus, bridal creeper and Paterson's curse. And in Queensland, particularly the Brisbane and Gladstone areas, we have the ongoing problem of fire ants. That is why biosecurity is so important to Australia. We must remain vigilant to keep our country free of harmful diseases and pests. A report by the CSIRO released on 25 November last year says we are fortunate to be free of many pests and diseases. However I share the view of Minister Joyce, who says:

In biosecurity luck only happens to those who plan and work hard and with effect.

If we were indeed truly lucky in terms of biosecurity there would be no rabbits in Australia. National biosecurity is the responsibility of every Australian and every person who visits Australia. Instead of being worried about being caught for a few copied DVDs you bring back from Bali, be more concerned with the parasites that might be hidden in those carved wooden statues you have in your bag. Those DVDs might be seized and you might lose a few dollars.
but if a harmful parasite sneaks in in your luggage it could potentially cost the country billions of dollars. The men, women and indeed dogs of Customs and Border Protection and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service have done a magnificent job since 1901 and 1908 respectively to keep Australia a clean and healthy place for agriculture. I would like to acknowledge their efforts here today.

The Biosecurity Bill 2014 and the three accompanying bills will replace the 106-year-old Quarantine Act 1908. While the act has obviously done well in protecting Australia to this point, the 50 amendments to it are starting to create confusion and unnecessary duplication. When it comes to biosecurity we do not need a complicated system. We need one that is easy to understand and easy to administer, from government to end user. While the administration of this bill is important, the number one outcome must be a biosecurity system that is strong but fair, rigid in intent but flexible to use. This bill will allow our hardworking border force to continue to defend our borders from biosecurity threats in the effective way they have done for over a century, but it has to allow for the development of new technologies we cannot imagine.

To those who wrote the Quarantine Act 1908, manned flight on the scale we see today was unheard of or imagined, as was the size of container ships. This is why we need to update the laws relating to biosecurity now and not later. More amendments to the existing act will just add to the current jumble of regulations that are making the system harder to administer and confusing for importers and travellers.

This bill gives the Governor-General, on advice from the minister for agriculture, the power to declare a biosecurity emergency. This applies when the minister is certain there is a nationally significant risk. A biosecurity or a human biosecurity emergency can be declared for a period of three months or less. These emergency declarations will allow the minister to best direct resources to emergency areas and place requirements on certain goods such as specifying how people, goods and conveyances enter or leave a specified area, restriction of movement, evacuation or removal of goods from specified places and the treatment or destruction of goods. This may mean that hazardous material suits need to be worn or that shoes need to be washed after an emergency area has been entered. In the case of a human biosecurity emergency, it may mean a period of quarantine for individuals or groups suspected of carrying a disease. This will allow the minister and the departments the power they need to stop the spread of potentially devastating biosecurity risks.

Of course the bill also places limits on the powers that can be exercised and that is entirely appropriate. There are obligations to protect citizens from harm, and the use of these powers must be effective in achieving its purpose with individuals being inconvenienced no more than required and only for as long as is necessary. These are reasonable measures in the circumstances of a national emergency. This bill makes it legal for restriction of movement to be imposed on individuals and it is important that such restrictions be kept to the minimum time needed to make a determination on the status of someone suspected of carrying a harmful disease. This is where advice will be taken from specialists in the area to determine those periods of restriction.

This bill also seeks to address the ways in which harmful biosecurity risks can enter the country. As I said earlier, the original framers of the Quarantine Act 1908 could not have envisaged the ways in which people and goods travel today so it is important this bill reflects
the current situation. Ships will be under strict observation when it comes to the discharge and recharge of their ballast water. Ballast water performs a necessary role. However, it can also provide an easy conveyance for unwanted diseases and organisms. This is especially important for ships travelling from country to country, loading and unloading, with the need to use ballast water. That is why ships coming to Australia will need to discharge ballast water in international waters before entering Australian waters. Ballast water can be, and has in the past been, responsible for the introduction of harmful species and organisms. It is essential we, as a responsible government, do all we can to prevent this happening again.

This bill also allows for the appointment of a Director of Biosecurity and a Director of Human Biosecurity, who will be appointments with appropriate seniority and experience to exercise the powers within this bill. It is envisaged that these directors will assist with the general administration of the bill and provide guidance for the introduction, transition and application of the legislation to staff and the public. The power of general administration is at all times governed by and subject to the principles of administrative law. The Director of Biosecurity will be, or will be acting as, the Agriculture secretary. This ensures an appropriate level of seniority and experience. Likewise, the Director of Human Biosecurity will be, or will be acting as, the Chief Medical Officer, for similar reasons. This is particularly important when the administration of human biosecurity could potentially involve the use of invasive testing measures.

Australia has an enviable reputation, as I said before, as a country which produces clean food, and that food is highly desirable in overseas markets. I am sure that every member of this parliament wishes to safeguard that reputation and to safeguard the people of Australia from harm. This bill will drive Australia's biosecurity for the next 100 years. What this bill seeks to achieve, and achieves, is the balance between the old and the new. The old regime has in large worked very well in keeping Australia free of biosecurity threats that are commonplace in some parts of the world. So this bill has conserved that which has worked so well but clarified the way forward for biosecurity in Australia. The Biosecurity Bill 2014 is the bill Australia needs to protect Australia's hard-won reputation as a producer of quality, disease-free produce and to protect Australians from pests and diseases which could seriously harm our way of life. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (18:32): The Biosecurity Bill 2014 is about protecting Australia's clean, green image when it comes to what we export, as an agriculture-exporting nation. It is absolutely important that we get this bill right, not only because quarantine is crucial to our nation's exporting future but also because it is vitally important that we have a regulatory framework with which our exporters can work. We do not want to place too much red tape on them as they seek to find and access new markets across the world. For this reason, this bill should be supported. Consecutive governments have taken a piece of legislation which first existed in 1908, which has been amended over 50 times, and have decided, not before time, that what we need to do is consolidate all this legislation into one piece of new legislation which will enable us to have confidence in how we go about protecting our country against the importing of diseases which can do significant harm to our nation—such diseases, for instance, as foot-and-mouth disease, which would be absolutely catastrophic to our nation's economy.
For the electorate that I represent, this bill is significant. We are the largest producer of dairy goods in the nation. When it comes to beef, wool, sheepmeat, grain, our region is in the top 10 when it comes to what is produced. The area I represent is at the heart of our agricultural production. The majority of what we produce is exported, so we have to ensure that the countries that we are exporting our goods to understand that what we are sending them is disease free. We also have to do what we can to ensure that diseases which could put in jeopardy this production are kept out of our country.

It was interesting listening to the member for Lindsay before, when she talked about the impact that equine influenza had on parts of her electorate. As someone who follows the racing with great interest, who likes a punt every now and again and who has had a small ownership in a few horses—some slow, some which have run all right—I remember the impact that equine influenza had on the racing industry and the effort and the cost that it took to try and eradicate it. I remember going out to the Canberra racetrack, where participants had to be behind closed glass to watch the races. The owners and the trainers of horses could not physically go down and see the horses after the races had been run, because of the fear of what that human contact with those horses could have, with the spread of that disease. That is the impact that disease can have on an industry. It was incredibly important that we eradicated equine influenza from our horseracing industry, but other diseases are significant in many ways, and the impact that they could have, especially on our agricultural bulk commodity exports, would be absolutely harmful to our economy.

There are two things which I think are very important to point out about this piece of legislation. The first is the consultation which has taken place to ensure that this piece of legislation does the job that the industries on the ground want it to do. It is worth pointing out that, during the drafting phase of the bill, the Department of Agriculture established an industry legislation working group. The group consisted of 16 representatives, including the Invasive Species Council, the National Farmers Federation, Shipping Australia, Qantas, and the Custom Brokers and Forwarders Association.

It was not only that consultation which took place when the bill was being drafted. Following the agreement from the government to progress the legislation and to inform stakeholders about the changes made and the next steps, a biosecurity legislation forum was held on 24 October 2014. Approximately 80 organisations, bodies and agencies were invited to the forum, with over 40 attending. So what we are seeing here is a bill which, at the draft stage, had industry involvement in its preparation. Not only that but, once the bill was finalised, there was also significant consultation with industry and other organisations involved in this. This is good law-making because, as I said earlier, this bill is vitally important, not only to my electorate but to the nation. The processes which have taken place in putting it together have been excellent with regard to making sure that all participants and all those who could be impacted by it have been consulted along the way.

There is another element to it which is also significant. What the government has not sought to do in modernising this legislation is say, 'What we can do is put this safeguard in place, this safeguard in place and this safeguard in place and provide a regulatory burden on industry and those who are seeking to control our quarantine regime.' This bill has done all that. It is modernised, but it is done in a way which has a deregulatory benefit, and that deregulatory benefit is $6.9 million per annum. This is a significant piece of legislation for
industry because it gives industry confidence in how our quarantine regime is going to be managed going forward. It also says to industry, 'In modernising this legislation, we are going to do all we can to ensure that the cost of this quarantine legislation does not burden you. In fact, it will reduce the regulatory impact that it has on you.' That is incredibly important.

There are some other aspects to this bill that need to be pointed out. The import risk analysis—the IRA review—has been replaced. A biosecurity import risk analysis will be introduced to replace the current IRA process in the Quarantine Act. An examination of the IRA process was undertaken as part of the coalition's election commitment in response to stakeholder concerns. Feedback focused primarily on administrative and minor regulatory changes to the IRA process. They have been considered in the development of the delegated legislation and relevant administrative policies.

The issue of regional differences has also been dealt with. Some stakeholders expressed the need for regional differences in biosecurity concerns to be taken account of in this bill. The idea was that there are regional differences in the way that pests and diseases might be more prevalent in one part of Australia than another. This was issued and considerable thought was given as to how this would be best dealt with. When it comes to international agreements, phytosanitary international agreements, the words 'regional difference' are not used. What the government has done is use terminology which can be used and understood in other international agreements, whether they be multilateral agreements or agreements with our bilateral partners. So, rather than using the concept of regional differences, we are using the concept of 'part of Australian territory'. We will talk about diseases or pests entering Australian territory or part of Australian territory. That is how we will deal with this significant change. Once again, this has been done through a proper consultative process which has enabled this new focus to take place in updating and upgrading this legislation.

This legislation was started under the previous government. It then went to a Senate committee and has obviously been finalised by the current minister. I would like to commend the Minister for Agriculture for the way that he has gone about this. I would also commend the Senate committee for the sensible recommendations that they put forward, some of which have been adopted and put into this bill. Also, I praise industry for their willingness to participate in the process of upgrading this legislation, because without that input we as lawmakers would not have the confidence that we have in order to say that this piece of legislation should be commended to the House.

In conclusion, I go back to where I started. The government has set about ensuring that our exporters have access to as many countries as they possibly can and in the cheapest way that they can possibly export. Our free trade agreement agenda last year was definitely a significant highlight of what was achieved in this place: free trade agreements with China, with Japan and with South Korea, all of which will benefit our agricultural consistency—you know this as much as I do, Mr Deputy Speaker Whiteley.

But also, what the government has done with this bill is to say to our agricultural constituencies in particular, 'You now have another tool to ensure that you can be absolutely sure that what you are sending from Australia into those countries is disease- and pest-free. And also, you can be sure that the government is doing the best it can in a cost effective way to keep pests and disease from entering Australia.'
We all know that there is risk. But what the government is doing through this piece of legislation is to manage that risk to the best of its ability, saying to industry, 'You need to come along with us in managing that risk,' and saying to industry, 'We stand by you, side by side, especially when it comes to agriculture, to ensure that you can continue to grow and continue to be an absolutely vital part of our national economy.'

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (09:55): Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this Biosecurity Bill 2014 in this cognate debate. The Biosecurity Bill, which seeks to replace the Quarantine Act 1908, is extremely important and relevant for Australia as we enter into an unprecedented level of trade and globalisation.

Global trade has evolved significantly since the original Quarantine Act was legislated and passed over 100 years ago. Where law-makers once faced possible outbreaks of smallpox, leprosy, yellow fever and the bubonic plague they are now alerted to numerous modern complex infectious diseases that are viral and which can be transferred amongst animals as well as in animal-to-human transmissions and, of course, human-to-human interactions.

On top of this, the previous legislation could not account for the vast changes in technology now available to businesses. Where trade once primarily occurred through ocean voyages, modern technology and demand has led to an increase in logistics choices by air travel, air cargo and ocean deployment. It is an understatement to say that means of trade have shifted. As such, it would be irresponsible for the legislation not to catch up to ensure the safety of our employees, residents and animals, as well as to protect the myriad businesses involved.

The bill today is indeed the most substantial change to our biosecurity framework. This is essential, considering the volume of goods being exchanged in Australia. Not only is this bill much needed to strengthen our existing system, it must be implemented in a manner that allows a simplified and streamlined process so that it does not hurt Australian businesses and allows flexibility in which biosecurity risks can be managed.

The world has advanced in the way in which it transports animals, goods and people, and as such our legislation must ensure they are protected and any risks mitigated accordingly. In addition, the new bill will allow for any enforcements to have scientific grounding and for those who have breached the rules to fully understand the implications of their wrongdoings. Furthermore, recent global events have demonstrated that we must be proactive in managing our biosecurity risks and that this should always be at the centre of our nation's best interests. Infectious diseases such as the SARS outbreak and the foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks in the UK, coupled with threats of bioterrorism, such as the threat of anthrax, convey that prudence in our border security and quarantine is more important than ever.

We may appear geographically isolated, given that we are the world's largest island, but we are never removed from any of the aforementioned threats since air travel and global mobility are at their world peak. Given that Australia is a major player when it comes to commodity exports, retaining a safe, secure and therefore favourable biosecurity status allows for lower food production costs for our producers and continued access to export markets whilst supporting our nation's contribution to a secure global food supply.

A reformed, stronger biosecurity system also means that our environment and our standards of living can be protected from biohazards and other infectious diseases. Increased global travel and tourism demonstrate the significant impact of existing and emerging
infectious diseases affecting trade, animal production, public health, wildlife conservation and economic growth. Moreover, since 1994 there have been more new animal disease viruses identified in Australia than at any other time. The risks that our country faces are noteworthy, given that transmission of disease affects tourism and trade: the increasing movement of people and products, an evolution of infectious diseases against a backdrop of shifting climates, changing ecological patterns and current limitations in surveillance and response capabilities—especially with unstable movement patterns in neighbouring regions like Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Indonesia.

As our nations become increasingly borderless and our trade wholly dependent on globalisation, it is vital that we have the resources and regulatory framework in place to ensure the safety of our people and businesses. Institutions like the CSIRO, that are at the forefront of Australia’s research, are continuously finding solutions to evolving biological hazards and infectious diseases that can affect millions of lives and destroy agriculture. These solutions must be part and parcel within an updated legislative reform.

The bill today seeks to introduce a range of enforcement powers, not simply criminal penalties as the Quarantine Act did, so that those who are wilful in their negligence are dealt with accordingly, compared to those who have unintentionally broken the law. Very importantly, today's bill will allow appropriately qualified and trained biosecurity enforcement officers to apply for and execute a range of warrants to enter premises, including buildings and vessels, and to carry out certain activities to risk manage biosecurity hazards. This is increasingly needed and appropriate, given the scope of our trade and tourism levels.

To reiterate why we are doing this and the need for this bill, I will refer to some statistics. For example, in the financial year ending 2013, the Department of Agriculture cleared approximately 186 million international mail items, 1.7 million sea cargo consignments and 26 million air cargo consignments. This is on top of the 16 million international passenger arrivals to our borders.

It must also be noted that for the past two decades, 75 per cent of emerging infectious diseases have been infections transmitted from animals to humans, mostly wildlife in origin.

IAS, short for invasive alien species, is believed to cause the greatest financial loss to agricultural production. The CSIRO has reported that IAS is the largest biological threat to global food security and one of the top two international threats to biodiversity. This cannot be underestimated given that IAS costs Australia approximately $8 billion a year in agricultural damage and leads the way in destroying our native species. This is an extraordinary figure when our agricultural export market is worth $60 billion. Not only does IAS cause crop damage; it has serious ramifications for humans as well because it carries serious allergens and other disease vectors. As I mentioned, transmission of disease does not just occur between animals; it can be passed from animals to humans. Any outbreak of disease, whether human or animal, ultimately affects our supply chains including tourism, trade and national health.

The primary focus of this bill is to strengthen the regulatory framework that enhances our biosecurity without negatively impacting on the businesses that Australians trade with. Every year, Australia has seen an increase in animal, goods and vessel movements through our borders, and this is only going to increase further. The past 10 years have seen air travellers increase by 80 per cent, sea container movements by 82 per cent and bulk cargo by 16 per
cent. Thus, legislation must encompass the necessary protection for our primary industries as well as our environment.

This bill is an opportunity to improve our system and the development of new legislation will alleviate the existing burden on Australian farmers and businesses. We have consulted extensively with stakeholders and they have informed us time and again that they want something simple and effective, not further red tape and bureaucracy. This bill will now provide them with this. I am pleased to report that this bill will see a reduction of more than $6.9 million a year in business compliance costs as a result of a clearer and more user-friendly framework. It will provide new powers to allow the Commonwealth to respond to biosecurity risks within Australia and assist state and territory counterparts with nation-wide pest and disease management, including the marine ecosystem.

Another significant change this bill will bring will be the ability to assess the compliance history of a business—a background check if you will—to fully risk-manage the likelihood of an organisation breaking quarantine rules. Under the old Quarantine Act, assessments were only made for goods themselves. Thus, businesses could breach their obligations, intentionally or not, without suffering appropriate penalties. The bigger issue is the risk this would pose to our biosecurity. Having legislation which sends a strong and clear message to those wilfully negligent ultimately protects Australian commodity exports. It will allow goods to be transported without unnecessary delay and, in the event of biosecurity risks, allow for them to be appropriately and effectively managed.

For our farmers and consumers, a strong biosecurity system, as a result of improved legislation, means agriculture is safer from exotic pests and IAS, and livestock is also better protected from instances of disease such as the foot and mouth outbreak in the UK. It will prevent Australian businesses from losing out on their bottom line from invasive diseases and pests, and will give them a simpler framework to use, without unnecessary red tape. Better business outcomes for them ultimately mean a bigger contribution to our national economy.

Today's bill will also allow appropriate transitional periods so that ports, vessels and landing place operators can upgrade their facilities where necessary and undertake any amendments that may be required. As discussed previously, a substantial amount of commodities arrive via sea and air—more than ever before. Thus, any biosecurity risks must be immediately managed. Industry participants can also voluntarily enter into an arrangement with the Commonwealth to have their operations managed in an efficient and effective way.

The Biosecurity Bill 2014 is absolutely necessary to sustain current Australian export trade and cultivate further growth into the future. Whether in primary industry, wholesaling or based in export, strengthening our biosecurity legislation will lead to increased capacity for continuous domestic production, and sustained international exports with domestic and international businesses. For Australians, it means increased opportunities for commercial markets operating in a reliable system that affords them confidence, dependability and protection.

Losing close to $7 billion a year to compliance costs coupled with a further $8 billion in agricultural loss is far too much for any economy. This bill is the first step in mitigating further losses so that Australian businesses can harness and cultivate all opportunities, whilst minimising preventable financial losses. Moreover, we have the responsibility of ensuring the
safety of our wellbeing from the food and livestock we consume or breed to the goods that we import and export. I commend the bill to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiteley):** I thank the member for his contribution. The question is that this bill now be read a second time. I give the call to the member for—help?

**Mr Pasin:** I am not going to help you, Mr Deputy Speaker!

*A government member:* Barker.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Barker. Thankyou.

**Mr Pasin:** I was going to start with such high praise of you in the chair, and all these things, but I think that I might just pass over that!

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** You should do.

**Mr PASIN** (Barker) (18:58): I rise today to speak on the Biosecurity Bill 2014 and associated legislation. The bill is supported by four other bills that are designed to help ensure the smooth transition from the Quarantine Act 1908 to the enactment of the bill. Australia's world-class biosecurity system relies on a legislative framework that was designed more than 100 years ago. It is time to update it to match the changing global environment. When the Quarantine Act 1908 was written, people and goods arrived only by sea, and biosecurity threats included diseases like the bubonic plague, leprosy, yellow fever and smallpox.

As a member for an electorate whose economic wellbeing is inextricably linked to the biosecurity of our agricultural sector, I consider this raft of legislation to be fundamental to the people in business in my electorate. Representing the leading wine-, citrus-, potato-, rock-lobster-, nut-, cattle- and sheep-producing regions in South Australia and arguably the country, I believe that strengthening the biosecurity of these sectors is an essential innovation to enhance our continued prosperity, both within my electorate and for our nation's export driven advances into new markets.

It is a nice segue, given that I am joined in the chamber by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, who accompanied me through my electorate, so you can take his word for what my constituents do and the great products they produce—not that we consumed all of it! We had a fair go, whether wine, beer—

**Mr Baldwin:** My wine!

**Mr PASIN:** I know; it is coming; don't worry! I am being chimed, of course, because the parliamentary secretary was expecting a bottle of the famous Hill of Grace, which of course is a product of the Henschke family. It will arrive.

*Mr Baldwin interjecting—

**Mr PASIN:** It does not come from the Hunter Valley, thankfully; it comes from the good people in the Barossa. But it will arrive.

Since coming to office, of course, the coalition has concluded three crucial free trade agreements with Japan, Korea and, most recently, China. Part of the rationale for these countries wanting to have greater access to our produce is the biosecurity of our exports. Australia's biosecurity regime has been successful in keeping some of the diseases and threats that have affected particularly European countries from insidiously entering our country. This biosecurity is bolstered by the knowledge that our natural water resource, land management and air quality practices add yet another layer of protection to our food production.
It is also true that our biosecurity faces threats, some of which are malicious and designed to potentially serve political ends. The threat of transnational terrorism and attempts to threaten our food supply weaken our claim to have a secure quarantine regime and mean that we must undertake improvements to legislation and regulations that will meet the needs of the 21st century threat environment we now face. Simply being an island nation is no longer sufficient to guarantee the biosecurity of our agricultural sector—though I must say that it would be better than being an island state. The world has changed and will continue to change. The legislation we are debating today is designed to flexibly support Australia's biosecurity system in any age, regardless of future challenges, including advances in transport and technology.

For example, the bill provides a range of enforcement powers rather than relying, as the Quarantine Act did, on criminal penalties. Biosecurity risks can be complex and so can our biosecurity requirements. Not everyone who breaches the rules will have understood them or have done so deliberately, so it is appropriate that we have a range of enforcement powers. In this bill, we have criminal penalties that allow us to respond to those who would deliberately do the wrong thing, as well as other powers to proportionately respond to those who inadvertently do the wrong thing.

This legislation will cut unnecessary red tape by reducing compliance costs on business by nearly $7 million a year. As we continue to strengthen biosecurity management, the bill will provide national capability to respond to pest and disease incursions within Australia, including, of course, the important marine environment.

The bill will be broadly broken up into three categories. Firstly, we have operational chapters that support daily biosecurity business such as assessing and managing biosecurity risk in relation to goods, transport and technologies. There will then be stand-alone chapters that support specialised biosecurity situations such as the management of human health and ballast water, emergency responses and, of course, the important partnerships with business. Administrative chapters that apply across the entire bill are designed to provide a framework for the smooth administration of the biosecurity system, such as compliance and, importantly, enforcement.

Agriculture—as you know, Mr Deputy Speaker Whiteley—is a key pillar of the Australian economy. It must be supported by a strong and robust biosecurity system. Any adverse changes to our world-class biosecurity status would have a direct impact on domestic productivity, farm-gate returns and export opportunities. This legislation, jointly undertaken by the Agriculture and Health portfolios, will underpin a strong and seamless biosecurity system to cover human, environmental, plant and animal health. This bill will also allow our systems to get smarter, our penalties to be fairer and our people to work where the risk is greatest.

A number of significant reviews of the biosecurity system, most recently the review of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity, the Beale review, have outlined opportunities to improve the system, including the development of new legislation. The review concluded that Australia's biosecurity system is good, often the envy of other countries, but far from perfect. It recommended significant changes to improve the system's ability to deal with changing and increasing biosecurity risks. The changes of course include improved partnerships with the state and territory governments and with industry; enhanced government structures, including
an independent commission to assess the biosecurity risks of imports; a national authority to undertake biosecurity operations and an inspector-general of biosecurity to audit the authority's work; a risk-returns approach to biosecurity's operational activities; new biosecurity legislation to replace the Quarantine Act 1908; and more funding for biosecurity activities and upgraded information technology systems.

This legislation has been developed over many years, with significant consultation undertaken with industry, state and territory governments, environmental groups, health professionals and the public at large, as well as trading partners. A robust biosecurity system is important in supporting Australia to remain free of many pests and diseases that are common around the world. We have to get biosecurity right because the stakes are high, and getting it right benefits everyone. It is a big job, and we use science to help us make the right decisions at the right time to get the best results.

As well as playing an obvious role protecting Australia's environment and way of life, safeguarding Australia from unwanted biosecurity risks also protects Australia's economy. This helps maintain our reputation as a producer of high-quality and safe agricultural products for the world. The Biosecurity Bill and supporting legislation have been designed to support the biosecurity system in any age, regardless of advances in transport, technology or future challenges. Just as with the Quarantine Act 1908, the biosecurity legislation, if passed, would be co-administered by the ministers responsible for agriculture and health.

The Biosecurity (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014 is the first companion bill to the Biosecurity Bill 2014. It will facilitate the transition from the Quarantine Act to the Biosecurity Act. This bill makes consequential amendments to a range of Commonwealth legislation to reflect the broad scope of managing biosecurity risk. It will also replace references to the Quarantine Act with, necessarily, the Biosecurity Act. Biosecurity is wide reaching and impacts air travel, shipping and fisheries amongst other matters with the result that over 20 pieces of Commonwealth legislation will require some minor amendments.

The bill will repeal the Quarantine Act and the Quarantine Charges (Collection) Act 2014. Most importantly, it will allow the Department of Agriculture to provide a smooth transition from the old legislation to the new regulatory framework. The bill will do this by ensuring that biosecurity risks managed under the Quarantine Act will continue to be managed following its repeal. For example, if a person is directed not to move a good under the Quarantine Act, that direction will still be valid under the Biosecurity Act. If an import permit application is made under the Quarantine Act, it is taken to have been made under the Biosecurity Act. In some key areas, such as approved industry partnerships, the transition will take place over a longer period of time so business has more time to be compliant with the new regulations, and both business and the department can better manage the volume of work associated with change.

Three charging bills are being introduced as part of the Biosecurity Bill package. These will allow the Commonwealth to impose charges that appropriately reflect the cost of administering the Biosecurity Act now and into the future. The charging bills do not set the amount of the charge and do not apply any financial impacts on business. The charges, and who is liable and exempt from paying these charges, will be set in delegated legislation.
The first charging bill, the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Amendment Bill 2014, will amend the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Act 2014. This bill continues current cost recovery arrangements to enable effective management of biosecurity risks through the Biosecurity Bill. The bill will allow the Commonwealth to continue imposing suitable charges for activities and services relating to the administration of Australia's biosecurity system, including scientific analysis, intelligence, inspections and surveillance. This enables the Commonwealth to support and administer a robust, efficient biosecurity system where the appropriate responsibility for costs associated with the system lies with those who pose the highest risk to our biosecurity status. The charges will reflect the costs of providing services, ensuring that the department is sufficiently resourced to continue the critical job of protecting Australia's unique animal and plant health status.

The coalition treats this nation's biosecurity with the utmost seriousness, because it affects not only the wellbeing of our own people but also the wellbeing of people around the globe—the people who consume our high-value produce. That is why it is so important for our country, and for my electorate in particular, that this legislation pass. That is why I commend this package of bills to the House.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (19:11): My reason for speaking on the Biosecurity Bill 2014 is not that the change from being a quarantine act to a biosecurity act in itself is so immense. It is the fact that this is one of the more important pieces of legislation that exists in Australia, amongst all those bills that we have in our federal parliament. Agriculture, amongst other things, is extraordinarily important to our domestic situation but even more important to our export situation, as two thirds of everything that we grow, or thereabouts, is exported.

I think a lot of it is common sense as to why it has happened. It is an old act—it is 100 years old. It deals with a lot of different issues, and it is not surprising that after this time, as I believe, there have been over 50 amendments—I am surprised there are not more—it is to be rehashed and hopefully simplified; but it is a very rare thing if you achieve simplification.

We are an export nation by our very nature, and agriculture was the first product we had which brought income and everything else to Australia, mainly because we exported wool, we exported sheep, we exported various things. The Quarantine Act—now to be the Biosecurity Act—is old, for various reasons which I have already mentioned.

Recently the Minister for Trade and Investment has been successful—I believe very successful—in negotiating free trade deals with our three biggest trading partners. If we were to take our eye off the ball on the issues of quarantine and biosecurity—but now we are going to put it under the Biosecurity Act—we would be putting at risk regional Australia's future, and a lot of Australia's future.

I think we need to keep in mind that AQIS, who are charged with looking after most of the things in this bill, have two jobs. One is, from the domestic point of view, to check the goods which come into Australia to ensure they are free of diseases, pests and the like which we do not have.

And they, by and large, do a very good job of that. The greatest example in recent times is probably apples that we had to allow in from New Zealand because we lost in the disputes committee of the ATO some few years ago and had to renegotiate our agreement with New Zealand. But, because of their diligence, AQIS found trash on the apples that did come in—
some 17 loads from memory—and the trash is what keeps the mites and the various things alive coming through, not the apples.

AQIS, by and large, do a very good job. Their job is to make sure we do not get pests et cetera from overseas to infiltrate Australia and threaten our own food security and the health of what we might want to export. The reason for having the job of inspecting those things we would export to other countries, particularly those three major trading partners with whom we have our new free trade deals, is to ensure that we maintain the standard demanded by our trading partners and by ourselves. We basically go on the theory that what we demand of ourselves we demand of our exports. Nobody really has a higher standard than we do.

If we did not do that and we accidentally—one would hope, if it came to that and I pray it does not—exported disease to another country, that would be the end of our favoured nation status, which we obviously seem to have got in recent times with some of those free trade deals. It is a huge, very big thing for us. Trade is our lifeblood. The fact that we produce such good articles of a high standard that are disease-free is the greatest trading power that we have. We have desired articles. We are not a big grower of a lot of things but we tend to be a big exporter. Certainly in terms of beef and wheat, we are nowhere near the biggest producers of those articles but we are one of the big exporters of them. If we do not maintain our standard of exports then we are in very big deep trouble. We are too dear for a lot of the world so we depend upon the high-price markets to make ourselves viable. This bill, I would certainly hope, has ticked the boxes, has not taken its eye off the ball and will do those things.

The old bill did allow somewhere like Tasmania, which is an island so it has good, even better security than the rest of us hope, to export or to have a situation somewhat different to the mainland. As I understand, that will be maintained by different wording. It used to be called 'regional differences' by which we did IRAs, import risk analyses. But because of international language, it is now going to be called a 'different part of Australian territory'. I guess we have to admit that Tasmania is a part of Australia. I think it is fair enough that Tasmania should continue to have that ability. States cannot prevent imports into Australia but they can prevent trade between states. In this case, it is about Tasmania's ability to trade somewhat differently to the mainland. I have no problem with that because it has extra advantages for the mainland.

The things that are a little new or expressed differently are the ability of AQIS and the authorities to get a warrant from a judge, as you do, to go on to anyone's property. The law has to allow AQIS to inspect where there is believed to be a problem. AQIS officers have to convince the judge or the magistrate that they have a reason to go there. I do not have a problem with that. I think our favoured nation status is worth a few inconveniences to be maintained.

I commend the bill to the House, not because there is anything particularly startling in it but because it is one of the most necessary bits of legislation that the parliament will have before it.

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (19:20): I might just comment on the contribution my colleague that preceded me made. There would be very few if any people in the House that would have a more intimate knowledge on biosecurity than that member for Calare. In his previous role as shadow agricultural minister, he was very active in that space.
Indeed, I believe it was his advice that got our current agriculture minister through a couple of sticky situations. I am very privileged to be following his contribution.

This biosecurity package of bills consists of five bills: The Biosecurity Bill 2014 seeks to replace the Quarantine Act; the Biosecurity (Consequential Amendment Transitional Provisions) Bill to repeal the Quarantine Act 1908, to update referred references to other Commonwealth legislation, and to ensure the biosecurity risk continues to be managed during the transition from the Quarantine Act to this new legislation; and the three quarantine charges amendment bills will repeal the Quarantine Charges (Collection) Bill and allow charges to be collected under the Biosecurity Bill 2014.

As we heard in other contributions, the Quarantine Act 1908 has been in place for over a century now and has been amended no less than 50 times. During this time, Australia's biosecurity risks have changed significantly as a result of passenger and trade volumes increasing and from imports from a growing number of countries, and new and sea craft technologies. The biosecurity legislation provides a strong regulatory framework that enables the management of biosecurity risks now and enhances Australia's capacity to manage biosecurity risks into the future. The Biosecurity Bill 2014 provides the primary legislative means and modern regulatory framework for the Australian government to manage the risk of pests and disease entering Australian territory causing harm to animal, plant and human health, and to the environment and the economy. The bill is designed to manage biosecurity risks, including the risk of listed human diseases, entering Australian territory or establishing themselves or spreading in the Australian territory or in part of the Australian territory.

There is a bit of background to this bill. It was first introduced into parliament in 2012. It was referred to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee. It lapsed when the parliament was prorogued. Areas of concern identified during the inquiry have been addressed in the new legislation. There have been a number of significant reviews of the biosecurity system—most recently, the review of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity, the Beale review, outlined opportunities to improve the system, including development of new legislation. This legislation has been developed over many years, with significant consultation undertaken with industry, state and territory governments, environment groups, health professionals, the general public and trading partners.

There has been an issue surrounding the Inspector-General of Biosecurity. I understand that the shadow minister raised this in his contribution, and I am sure that in the summing up the parliamentary secretary will touch on this too. While there have been some changes to that position, the position is now part of the biosecurity legislation, with delegated information-gathering powers to be granted by the minister to ensure the role can be carried out effectively. I think the shadow minister was being a little mischievous in his contribution.

This bill is all-encompassing. I might just touch on what it means to agriculture and particularly the region that I represent. We do indeed live in a changing world. With many businesses now importing and exporting directly via the internet and other means, the flow of goods in and out of our country is not as defined and specific as it was in previous times. An example of this is, some years ago, maybe three years ago, a local group of farmers in my electorate imported some fertiliser direct from China. Upon delivery to Condobolin, it was discovered that they had been fraudulently sent not fertiliser but soil, which created a biosecurity issue. AQIS and other agencies had to act quickly to remediate the situation and
clean up what could have been potentially a hazardous situation. Those situations will become more and more possible as our trade frees up, so our scrutiny needs to be much greater.

We have seen in the past what biosecurity breaches and ill-advised imports have done to agriculture. A couple of good examples of this are: the introduction of rabbits and the introduction of prickly pear. Indeed, I discovered in conversations with my father—when I was a child we would talk about his younger days—that the combination of prickly pears and rabbits meant that my grandfather was nearly unviable and nearly lost his farm, because they completely dominated the landscape. It was not until the advent of myxomatosis with rabbits and the cactoblastis moth with prickly pear that they were able to be managed.

In the back of my mind, the biggest risk to biosecurity and the threat to the livestock industries in Australia is the feral pig population. Feral pigs have proved to be pretty well indestructible. Despite millions of dollars and large amounts of effort and time across the countryside every year, the feral pig population is growing. While they are a problem in themselves—they have a hugely destructive effect on the landscape; I know from personal experience they can devour an entire lambing if you are not careful—if foot and mouth disease managed to become embedded in the feral pig population, then agriculture as we know it and livestock farming in this country would be changed forever and all the advantages we have would be lost.

Australia's biggest disadvantage as a trading partner is actually its biggest advantage. Our disadvantage is that we are an island surrounded by water a long way from the major markets and the high population areas, but that is also our greatest advantage. We now can import our produce into many of these countries because we are free of foot and mouth disease, bluetongue disease, mad cow disease and a lot of these other issues that really are crippling our trading competitors, and this must be defended at all costs.

We need to be fair dinkum about this. The member for Calare mentioned that we have dual responsibility. We need to be keeping a close reign on our imports but we also need to be responsible and keep an eye on our exports; because, while it is tempting to use biosecurity as an artificial tariff to protect our own producers, doing so is fraught with danger. We must rely on the science around this. We must be consistent in our exports, as well as our imports, to retain our credibility. We are treading a very fine line.

Current reality television shows about airport security show how people can inadvertently put our livestock producers at risk.

I use the example of someone who has been overseas to their country of birth and their uncle has a secret family recipe he uses to produce salami. If they secret salami into their luggage to bring home so members of their family can have a memento of their trip overseas and the scraps off the table are inadvertently thrown outside and get into a pig population, indeed we would have serious problems. I, quite frankly, do not believe, regardless of what we throw at wild pigs, we could possibly control them.

Also of real concern are fire ants. At the moment there is an operation going on around the port of Botany to track down and eradicate fire ants. Some years ago I visited some cattle ranches in Florida. The fire ant population meant that those properties could not be used for breeding purposes. The fire ants were killing calves. When fire ants get into an agriculture situation you cannot run sheep or small animals because they will be killed by the ants.
Indeed, in Florida there were reports that fire ants had actually killed calves. They are such a ferocious and vicious pest. At all costs we need to make sure we keep these pests out.

I do support this bill. I understand that, despite some expected rhetoric from the shadow minister, the opposition will be supporting this bill. I commend them for that. I understand that this bill commenced its life in the previous government. It is an example of how in this place we can work across party lines to come up with legislation that is of benefit to the people we represent. This bill has my full support.

Dr STONE (Murray) (19:32): Australia's biosecurity system is of pivotal importance, as we have been hearing from speakers on both sides of the House. It is essential for human, plant and animal health, the environment and the economy. Extraordinarily until these biosecurity bills were introduced we were depending on the Quarantine Act 1908. That act has been amended over 50 times and there have been a number of reviews. The point that then follows is that the act has become clumsy, complex and unwieldy. There is a lot of repetition in it. It is like our tax acts. So this is the time. These new bills were introduced in 2014 and in 2015 we should have a world best biosecurity system supported by appropriate legislation.

I cannot stress how important this is for my electorate of Murray. My electorate in northern Victoria depends on agribusiness. All agriculture, particularly our exports, was worth $39.4 billion to the Australian economy in 2013-14. It was when the drought broke and our agricultural exports were once again able to flow through our ports that we were able to deal with the global financial crisis in the way we did. Our agribusiness exports are critical for this country's wellbeing. Of course a good farmer who is being reasonably and viably sustained economically is a good environmentalist.

Our environment is unique in Australia. We have lots of species that are not found anywhere else in the world. Numbers of them though are incredibly vulnerable to imported diseases and pests. You can imagine if rabies got into our native population, carried perhaps by the wild pig population. The member for Parkes mentioned that the wild pigs in Australia are indestructible and are in almost all of our damper environmental places. If they carried this disease, you can imagine how it would infect so many domestic animals and wildlife. There is foot and mouth, blue tongue and a whole range of other diseases that we have not experienced or seen in Australia. This is due perhaps to good luck but I would argue it is also due to past scrupulous and careful quarantine inspection services.

Our marine industry has suffered from invasive pest species like the crown-of-thorns starfish, which was probably brought in with ballast water and released into the marine environment. We are still tackling that pest starfish. It has destroyed a lot of our unique Great Barrier Reef and other parts of our marine environment. It could have been avoided perhaps if we had had better regulation around the discharge of ballast water or sediment out of our own domestic ships and international ships. We have to be so careful of our marine environment because we are an island nation and a lot of the last remaining wild fish species are found in our waters.

Then there are the human health issues. We have been fortunate in being able to avoid the worst of the avian flu and so far, thank goodness, being able to avoid some of the crippling diseases we have recently seen, like the Ebola virus in parts of Africa. We have to be scrupulous and careful at all times in our inspection regimes and our reasonable and sensible regulation.
I am particularly conscious of what damage can be done when our quarantine system fails us or we experience phytoterrorism, when someone deliberately alleges we have a biosecurity breach or a problem with an invasive species that will interfere with our trade. I refer to the 1997-98 apple and pear fire blight scare. Australia, fortunately, has never had the apple and pear fire blight disease that effects pome fruit in most of our developed trading nations, like the United States and New Zealand. This disease is also found in much of Europe in its pome fruit industry or its wild related plants. We felt quite proud of the fact that we had not got this pome fruit disease.

My area in Murray grows over 85 per cent of all pears in Australia and over 50 per cent of all apples. So we are particularly concerned about keeping out the trade in fresh apples from countries that have this disease well established—for example in the case of New Zealand, for over 100 years. You can imagine our concern when there was an allegation from a New Zealand scientist who, on a one-day holiday to the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, plucked a leaf or a twig from a cotoneaster hanging over a footpath. A cotoneaster is a host species to this disease. Without telling the Australian authorities, the scientist took the twig back in his pocket, or his luggage or his briefcase to New Zealand, where it was inspected and declared internationally that Australia had in fact not been truthful about its apple and pear fire blight circumstances, because this New Zealand scientist had proof in his pocket that we, like New Zealand and other countries, were suffering from this highly contagious pome fruit disease.

That announcement closed down the pome fruit industry in my electorate. No fruit could be taken to other states or exported. Over two million apple and pear trees had to be inspected by hand, one by one. There was an enormous investment by the Department of Agriculture and local fruit growers in inspecting and checking all of the other host species in the area, like the wild rose bushes. Of course, nothing was found, but the cost to the industry of that season’s lost production was extraordinary. I would also add that the relationships between the two countries orchardists was shaken for a while given we had considered ourselves friends in relation to sharing in quarantine inspection standards and making sure that we were, as far as possible, soul mates in inspecting and keeping diseases out of our respective farmland. So I have experienced what can happen with a sudden announcement of a new, highly contagious disease—one that we have not before experienced in this country. It cost my growers millions of dollars in that one season.

But we have not only had this one bad experience in my area. Just last year we had an extraordinary circumstance where imported fruit, processed fruit, coming from China and South Africa was making my local SPC and Ardmona fruit processing manufacturer non-viable. There was so much of this product coming into Australia, made so cheap by the high Australian dollar and by the more lax antidumping regime—one that the new parliamentary secretary for the environment took a great deal of care in righting in his time as the parliamentary secretary to industry and manufacturing. We now have a better antidumping regime, but unfortunately this time last year the regime was not adequate to protect Australia’s interest when it came to imported, dumped product, particularly fruit in this case.

It was not just the economic damage being done to Australian fruit growers and fruit manufacturers that was concerning. The National Measurement Institute of Australia analysed the contents of eight tins of canned peaches from China and they found that the samples contained levels of lead way above those allowed—in fact, double the lead allowed,
according to the Australian and New Zealand food safety standards. That was in one sample. The second sample of the eight contained 10 per cent more lead than allowed. So one was double and one was 10 per cent more than the allowed levels.

These high levels of lead if ingested by humans create serious health problems in the immediate and long-term, including brain damage and damage to digestion, reproduction and nervous systems. Children, the elderly and the frail are particularly vulnerable. You can imagine the concern we had when we found that these cans of peaches were on shelves. They had got through our inspection systems—and that is where I am concerned. Australia does have a regime—and hopefully this new act will help us to be more protected—where, after inspections, five, without any problems found, means you have a very significantly reduced level of inspection of the food product. We have got to be scrupulous in the way we test incoming food products.

Our strictest food safety and hygienic conditions in Australia are not necessarily imposed elsewhere. So, while we can be perfectly secure almost universally when we consume Australian products grown and manufactured in Australia, we have to be extremely careful when it comes to imported foods from countries where they have serious issues with soil and water contamination or different manufacturing processes and different regimes of sanitary control. I refer to the terrible problems that China has where, for example, six infants died and thousands were hospitalised with kidney damage in 2008 from milk adulterated with an industrial chemical. That problem was known, unfortunately, it would seem, to some bureaucrats for some time before it was widely published so parents could stop using this particular infant formula.

It gets to be almost amusing when in 2014 fox meat was found substituted as donkey meat in numbers of Walmart packages that were exported from China. I do not think we should be culturally insensitive in saying that donkey meat is a bit interesting in terms of contamination. You can have very pure donkey meat, I am sure, but the problem was that fox meat had been substituted. The suggestion is that that was because the fur trade in China had become less valuable there was a lot of surplus fox for the market so they turned it into a donkey meat substitute, when fewer foxes were needed for ongoing breeding purposes.

Then of course we have the issue of the government inspectors in China finding that, in Shanghai Husi Food, expired and rotten meat was being used to make chicken McNuggets, beef patties and other products totalling more than 5,000 boxes. The official news agency, Xinhua, reported that 100 tonnes of meat products were seized and that police detained five people as part of their inquiry. That factory supplied McDonalds, KFC and other fast food restaurants in China and is a subsidiary of the OSI Group based in Aurora.

We have to make sure that our incredibly high standards of food security and biosecurity are also expected of those who import products into our country and that our inspection regimes are sufficient to keep the Australian vulnerable, frail and elderly safe. I am particularly concerned that while you can guard yourself against certain products from certain places where you are aware of incidents or problems in the past, if you are in a restaurant or a nursing home or a prison or the defence forces, where you do not know where the food has come from, then you are perhaps more vulnerable to people buying a cheaper imported food or beverage. That is why our inspection services are so critical, and I stress that is why the
electorate of Murray is so dependent on good biosecurity services and a well-working piece of legislation. I strongly support this bill.

We are also at risk with things like the potential collapse of our beehives if we do not keep certain diseases from getting beyond where they are currently being detected in some parts of the country. We have to make sure that our native flora and fauna are protected in our unique environment. I commend all of those who have worked on it over many years. I also want to make sure we do not, through measures of austerity, slash too much of our human capital—for example, the number of inspectors for our inspection services. That would be a false economy because they are, after all, the front line for the protection of our country, our uniqueness, our human health, our animal welfare and certainly, I repeat, our unique environment. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (19:46): I would like to start by thanking all of the members for their contributions to this very important debate. Australia has a world-class biosecurity system. This system helps to preserve Australia’s unique pest and disease status, and protect our environment, human health and the wellbeing of our domestic animals, plants and our way of life. Our biosecurity system must be underpinned by a modern and effective regulatory framework. The legislation that has enabled us to do this, the Quarantine Act, has been amended no less than 50 times over the past 106 years. While this legislation has served us well in the past, it has become cumbersome to administer, difficult to interpret and incompatible with our business and risk management needs.

The Biosecurity Bill 2014 and the four companion bills—the Biosecurity (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014, the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Amendment Bill 2014, the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Amendment Bill 2014 and the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Amendment Bill 2014—are a collaboration between agriculture and health portfolios and will be jointly administered by them. The bill provides a new regulatory framework that supports the biosecurity system now and into the future, allowing biosecurity risks to be managed more effectively. This legislation will support the competitiveness and productivity of the agricultural sector, a key undertaking of this government.

Australia is free of many pests and diseases that are common around the world. This allows our farmers to produce higher quality products and increase the demand for those products. The Biosecurity Bill will help maintain Australia’s enviable pest and disease status, which is essential for Australian farmers to maintain access to overseas markets and build on our position as an exporter of the highest quality agricultural goods. In 2013-14, the total gross value of agricultural production was $53 billion. The Biosecurity Bill will help protect Australia’s environment from costly incursions by introducing a strong legislative framework that allows biosecurity risks to be managed more effectively. The Biosecurity Bill will also reduce red tape for the thousands of compliant businesses that regularly interact with the biosecurity system. It is estimated the cost to businesses will be reduced by $6.9 million a year because of the clearer, easier to use legislation and the improved processes it will enable. Finally, the Biosecurity Bill will provide the Commonwealth with the right tools to manage biosecurity threats, including health risks to the Australian population from serious communicable diseases. This has been particularly highlighted by the recent announcement
by the WHO about polio and the Ebola virus disease as being public health emergencies of international concern.

The member for Hunter raised a number of concerns regarding the Inspector-General of Biosecurity. The minister has advised that I can assure the member that the Inspector-General of Biosecurity position will be maintained under the current Inspector-General of Biosecurity arrangements, which is an administrative position. This does not diminish the importance of this key position; it just means that, consistent with the government's regulatory policy, an additional piece of legislation will not be created to establish this position. The ministerial review powers under the bill will be delegated and made available to the Inspector-General of Biosecurity to review the performance of functions of the excise of powers by biosecurity officials under one or more provisions of the bill. The minister will also have the flexibility to consider other individuals with differing expertise to conduct the review and select the right person, the person most suited to carry out the review.

The member raised concerns regarding the funding of the Inspector-General of Biosecurity. Again, the minister has said that I can assure the member that this funding is secure. The Inspector-General of Biosecurity is funded by departmental funding, and this position will continue to be funded. The current interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity's term ends on 30 June 2015. However, again, the minister has advised me that I can assure the member that the position and its funding will continue.

There are some things that are critical to this position. The Inspector-General of Biosecurity will continue to be independent by reporting to the Minister for Agriculture directly, and transparent by making their recommendations public. The current Interim Inspector-General of Biosecurity, Dr Michael Bond, has proven that this role can operate administratively with a high level of independence and transparency.

The Biosecurity Bill directly addresses this government's commitment to improving Australia's already world-class biosecurity system. For Australian farmers, it means that crops will be safer from exotic pests and livestock better protected from diseases such as foot-and-mouth. For the Australian economy it means increased capacity for sustained domestic production and international exports from a competitive and profitable agriculture sector. For the Australian community more broadly it means that everyone can continue to have confidence in the biosecurity system that protects our very way of life. I commend these bills to the House.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (19:54): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.
Biosecurity (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

Third Reading

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (19:55): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Amendment Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

Third Reading

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (19:55): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Amendment Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

Third Reading

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (19:56): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.
Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Amendment Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

Third Reading

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (19:57): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014

Crimes Legislation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth and Other Measures) Bill 2014

Returned from Senate

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

Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (19:58): Here we are again with this Higher Education and Research Reform Bill. It is just as bad as the first one—the Minister for Education has brought it back to the House after it was thoroughly defeated by the Senate. I am speaking against this bill because it continues to be unfair to students and prospective students looking to study at university, and it is bad policy for our country. It also creates uncertainty for many in our community, whether they be universities or students, and it is just an ideological frolic of the Minister for Education. It is not just an ideological frolic and unfair—it is a broken promise. The minister and the Prime Minister said that the current arrangements for university funding would not change. They said that before the election and indeed even after the election. The minister went on television saying that there would be no increases in HECS fees. Well, this bill clearly shows a broken promise. But it is more than that: this bill is a monument to the failures of this government.

The first bill was ill conceived, with virtually no consultation, and was dumped on the Australian public on budget night. It was incredibly flawed. Of course, we have those on the other side—39 of them, to be precise—that will say it was merely a victim of poor salesmanship from the minister and the Prime Minister. But we know that it is much deeper than that, that the policy is flawed, not the salesperson. With the government at Christmas time so desperate to try and have a win, they spent $15 million of taxpayers' money to spruik a reform package that had just been defeated in the Senate. It had
been rejected by the Australian people and rejected by the Senate, but we saw the desperation of this government, spending $15 million trying to convince the Australian people that this was not what they thought it was, that it was not bad policy; it was good public policy.

This bill in its current form is, as was the former legislation, unfair and very poor policy for Australia. The Labor Party could see this first up. That is why we have been continuing to campaign against these unfair changes. The Senate saw this legislation was unfair, rejecting it, and the Australian people saw it: like many on this side of the House and, I am sure, on the other side of the House, I had many, many people—constituents, families, people in the electorate—talking to me about how unfair this legislation was.

The minister would have us believe that the government has compromised, that this is a new package. But the bill before us today does a number of things that really punish those seeking to have an education, to obtain a university degree. But it also punishes the community in Australia and it punishes universities. This bill slashes the funding for Commonwealth supported places in undergraduate degrees by 20 per cent and, in some instances, up to 37 per cent. It cuts $1.9 billion out of our universities, but it also provides the opportunity for universities to move that cost onto students, which will lead—as we have seen—to $100,000 degrees for undergraduate students. We have seen $171 million worth of cuts to equity programs supporting our brightest who may not have the opportunity to go to university—support needed so that they can achieve their dream—$200 million worth of cuts to indexation of grant programs, $170 million worth of cuts to research training, fees for PhD students for the first time ever in this country’s history and $80 million worth of cuts to the Australian Research Council. We can see that this bill is no different. Tinkering around the edges does not change it. The substance is still there. This package is still grossly unfair. It is as flawed as the one that was defeated in December. No amount of weasel words from the Minister for Education can change that.

The bill has already been defeated once. The minister would have you believe that it was just a fear campaign that spoiled his moment in the House in December. But what the Minister for Education refuses to acknowledge is that the defeat of the first bill was the will of the Australian people. Countless phone calls, emails and letters to Labor members and senators have been coming in thick and fast. Australians right across the country have voiced their fundamental opposition to $100,000 degrees. The Australian community have already assessed these reforms and found them wanting.

Labor has led the fight against this unfair package, not as a fear campaign but because the legislation will punish and deter everyday Australians from disadvantaged backgrounds, from middle-class backgrounds—those that have the smarts but do not have the money to obtain a university degree—not to mention those coming from migrant communities and mature age individuals who would seek to improve their lot in life by getting a university degree. Labor will fight these unfair reforms, and our fight has continued over the summer. This time, in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, I hope that those on the other side will see the light and get rid of these unfair reforms.

The bill, much like its predecessor, if passed will slash the funding of Commonwealth supported places by 20 per cent and, as I have said, in some instances by a lot more. This cut automatically puts universities on the back foot and forces them to charge students the difference between what they are getting paid and what they would be getting paid after the
cut that will be made by the government. This will be just to break even. And, once universities have been deregulated, the increase in fees will be a lot more. Far from giving universities greater freedom and flexibility, this cut of 20 per cent condemns universities to make up the difference, slugging students for the same cost of a degree.

Once universities are deregulated, then they will be free to set their own price, and the financial pressure on students and families right across the country will automatically prevent many from ever obtaining a university education. The Minister for Education remains on the fence about whether the 20 per cent cut is in or out. Well, it is in this bill before the House tonight. It is an appalling cut to our universities and will have a big impact on students. Our universities and our students deserve better than this. The minister needs to stop using this cruel and unusual cut as a bargaining chip in his war on Australian university students and clarify once and for all whether this cut is in.

But we have seen a cut in funding not just to the undergraduate funding but also to the postgraduate funding. The cut to the money that universities get to support PhD students is also an appalling attack on the research capability of this country. We know that PhD students do not get a huge amount of income, but they contribute considerably to our economic and scientific capability. They provide input to our intellectual capacity as a nation. This cut to students, which leads to universities charging PhD students for the first time to do their degree, is very poor public policy indeed. We know that students under this package will face not only increasing undergraduate costs but PhD costs. What incentive will there be for students to take a career in academia or research? We will become a poorer nation, not a smarter nation, if this bill is supported.

Deregulation remains the central plank of this bill. The deregulation of university fees, allowing universities to charge undergraduate students what they want, is still at the core of this bill and still at the core of the unfairness of this bill. We only need to look as far as the United Kingdom or the United States of America. If we take the United States of America, national student debt has now reached $1.3 trillion. This is evidence of the devastating result of fee deregulation. That debt hangs around the neck of those students, preventing students in the United States of America from getting capital to start a new business, to raise a family or to buy a house. This is not the type of system that we want here in Australia.

The experience in the UK also demonstrates that this is fundamentally flawed. A report from Britain's Higher Education Commission, *Too good to fail: the financial sustainability of higher education in England*, warned that the deregulation system introduced there in 2012 'represents the worst of both worlds, where all parties feel they are getting a bad deal' and where the government is effectively funding universities to write off student debt rather than investing directly in teaching grants. Is that the sort of system we want here in Australia? We have a proud history of education in Australia with a well-performing system, but of course the government wants to continue to take us down the ideological path that has been proven, time and time again, not to deliver for the country.

Another major stumbling block for the government in pushing through their deregulation agenda is the level of debt expected to never be repaid, or doubtful debt. As noted in the evidence to the Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment, Professor Bruce Chapman of the ANU lamented:
The problem, as I see it, is that doubtful debt is a cost to the taxpayer but the universities are essentially controlling what that cost is going to be because the doubtful debt is a direct function of the loans that are outstanding and if the universities control what those fees are then that they will ultimately be controlling the levers that determine what that doubtful debt is and what the taxpayers pay. It is akin to a blank cheque being handed from the government to the universities on the matter of doubtful debt.

These sentiments were echoed by Professor Chapman’s colleague, Dr Timothy Higgins, when he added that doubtful debt ‘will go through the roof’.

So, quite frankly, this legislation not only is unfair and not only is a broken promise but also is bad policy when it comes to government debt. As highlighted in the UK Higher Education Commission report *Regulating higher education*, there are serious concerns in the UK around the effect that deregulation has had on global reputation and quality standards in United Kingdom universities. The report goes on to call on the UK government to prioritise legislation to provide students with greater financial protections and to secure the UK’s international reputation for excellence in higher education. Clearly, this is the evidence that the government is working on. The evidence is starting to show the concerns around deregulation and the problems with deregulation. Instead, here in Australia we have a government that continues to pursue an ideological path that is not in the interests of our universities, not in the interests of our students and not in the interests of the Australian taxpayer.

We know what the government can be like at times when they cannot get their legislation through. We have seen the Prime Minister often not listening to the Australian people. Not listening to his backbench and not listening to the Australian people got him in the trouble that he saw himself in today. We have seen that, when it comes to higher education, the government will threaten to get their changes. We were reminded in *The Australian* today that the government is prepared to axe research programs supporting 30,000 scientists and employing 1,500 staff as retribution if this package fails to get through the parliament. If that is not threatening behaviour to our universities, I am not sure what is.

The National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy is a government funded program designed to foster collaboration between the research sector and industry. Described as the backbone of research by Universities Australia, Labor stands appalled by the minister’s short-sighted tactic of holding Australia’s research sector to ransom in pursuit of his ideological agenda. It is no secret that these programs are structurally unrelated to the government’s proposed higher education changes, with any cut to research as a result of the blocked package of this bill being nothing more than retribution and payback. It is a desperate attempt by the Prime Minister and indeed the minister in their desire to get a win. We understand they need a win on the board and we understand they need something to hang their hat on, but it should not be at the cost of students, universities and the betterment of this country in terms of our research capability.

In stark contrast to the government’s plan that will see the Americanisation of our universities and will condemn students to $100,000 degrees, Labor has a very strong record on higher education, and I think it speaks for itself. I will highlight a number of positive achievements. Under the former Labor government, total budgeted funding for teaching, research and student support at universities was increased by around 100 per cent from 2007 through to 2017—a doubling of university funding in 10 years. Had this funding model gone
unchanged the Commonwealth investment in universities would have been $17 billion a year by 2017. This is a good investment in our future. Under Labor, investment in universities rose from $8 billion in $2007 to $14 billion in 2013. Despite the fiction peddled by those opposite, Labor saw a real student funding increase by 12.4 per cent between 2007 and 2012, while at the same time the numbers of students increased by about 190,000.

Labor is also committed to the proper indexation of university funds to clean up the Howard government's neglect of the university sector. Had we kept the Howard government's funding model as we found it, universities today would be worse off to the tune of $3 billion. Labor has much to be proud of when it comes to higher education. There are 750,000 students at Australian universities today, with one in every four of them there as a result of the hard work of the former Labor government. As I said, we put 190,000 more students into university. We boosted Indigenous student numbers by 26 per cent. We boosted regional student numbers by 30 per cent. We helped 36,000 extra students from low-income families into university when compared to the 2007 figures.

Labor wants to build up Australia's higher education sector, and this government wants to tear it down. I echo the sentiments of the Leader of the Opposition by saying to the Minister for Education that if this government is so committed to improving our universities, reverse the cuts already implemented, scrap this legislation and seek a mandate from the Australian people.

Of course, as I said previously, the government is quite desperate to get a win, and this minister, in response to his legislation being defeated in the parliament, has undertaken a confected attempt to try to con the Australian people into accepting his package. Never before, I think, has a government wasted $15 million of taxpayer money to sell reforms that have just been defeated by the parliament. This is a flagrant disrespect for public spending and flies in the face not only of the electorate who, in fact, have footed the bill for the minister's advertising blitz, but also contradicts the Short-Term Interim Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns. Senator Carr has raised this issue very publicly.

I think it is prudent to remind this place and all those who may listen to this debate of the government's solemn pledge on public spending in the lead-up to the last election. It was the Prime Minister who, on 25 August 2013, pledged with his hand on his heart:

We know that you expect us to be as frugal and prudent with your money, which we hold on trust from you, as you would be with your own hard-earned savings.

What the Prime Minister failed to mention is that this government reserves the right to run a campaign of deceit and misdirection at the taxpayers' expense, and should the public dare to disagree with any of it then the government just introduces new legislation.

So embarrassed was the minister of his advertising blitz that he went to ground, blaming Senator Madigan, of all people, for the campaign's very existence. It was not until Senator Carr had written to the Secretary of the Department of Finance, the Secretary of the Department of Education and, finally, the Auditor-General that the truth behind the government's reckless addiction to spending was finally revealed. Yet when Senator Carr asked about the planned advertising campaign in last year's Senate estimates he was met with an evasive answer and sideways glances from the representing minister. Perhaps the Minister for Education needs to stop covering up his intent to run an expensive, incorrect advertising program and to stop wasting millions of dollars of taxpayers' money.
We all know that there has been a second round of advertising budgeted for, and it will likely be upon us once this bill reaches the other place. I would say to the Prime Minister, to the minister and to the government: stop treating the Australian people like mugs. Stop pretending that you know better and that you have the wisdom of all knowledge, and stop spending taxpayers’ money on actually misleading the Australian people. The Australian people are smarter than that, and will be able to call you out. No amount of taxpayer funded advertising can ever make this unfair bill palatable to the public or to this parliament. No amount of advertising can erase the fact that this bill is a broken promise; a promise not only made before the election but a promise actually made after the election. Not only is this campaign a waste of public money but is actually based entirely on misinformation.

As Senator Carr pointed out in his letter to the Auditor-General, the government’s claim within the higher education advertisements that the Australian government will continue to pay for half the cost of undergraduate degrees for students fails on all accounts: it is neither accurate nor verifiable, and it attempts to mislead recipients of the advertising.

As the minister continues to claim that under his reform package the government will cover 50 per cent of tuition fees for university students, we are actually starting to see the evidence come in that this is completely false and completely untrue. Under the 2016 fee schedule for the University of Western Australia, students in some cases will be forced to pay around 90 per cent of the cost of their degree. The University of Western Australia have introduced an annual student fee of $16,000 from 2016 onward in anticipation of the successful passage of this legislation through the parliament.

The price hike applies to all of the university’s Commonwealth supported places for undergraduate studies encompassing arts, commerce, design and science. But given that the Commonwealth only contributes $1,805 a year for a commerce degree under the government’s five-tiered system, the University of Western Australia students will be forced to meet 89.96 per cent of the cost of their degree. Similarly, arts students will be forced to meet 72.66 per cent of the total cost of their degree. This is an increase of 160 per cent, while the University of Western Australia’s science degrees will skyrocket by 80 per cent.

The minister has described such fee increases as ‘modest’. That shows just how out touch they truly are. But, of course, it also shows that their advertising campaign was a lie. It was a lie and it misled the Australian people. We believe strongly that, first of all, the government should not use taxpayers’ money to advertise a campaign for legislation that had failed in the Senate and also that it should not mislead the Australian people. The Australian people will hold them to account.

But it doesn’t end there. The Queensland University of Technology have also released their fee structure for 2016. Analysis of these figures reveal that business students at the Queensland University of Technology will be charged 88 per cent of the cost of their degree as a result of the government’s changes. Eighty-eight per cent is a long way from the minister’s ongoing denial that students will only be making a contribution of 50 per cent of their degree. From these figures, it is easy to infer that other universities across Australia will introduce similar fee structures and then compete on their price signals in attracting the brightest minds to their campuses. Plainly, it is a blatant falsehood for the minister to waste nearly $15 million of public money peddling deceit and untruths.
Labor stand by our belief that these changes will lead to $100,000 degrees and the evidence is in that this will be a reality. It will lead to the brain drain from our regions and will condemn everyday Australians from lower socioeconomic backgrounds from even attaining a university education.

The minister must today apologise to the public for this blatant waste of taxpayers' money, and pledge to abandon any further higher education advertising campaigns.

The government's Americanisation of our university system will—

Ms RISHWORTH: I will take the interjection from the member across the table. Of course, one of the things he has failed to recognise is that his government pursued an advertising campaign after a piece of legislation was defeated. It was defeated. It had been voted down by this parliament and the bright sparks over there said: 'I know how we will get our legislation through the parliament. We will start advertising it. We will spend taxpayers' money on advertising it after it has been defeated.' I would say to the minister: go back to the book, have a look at the short-term interim guidelines, maybe re-read them and maybe get someone to have a look at them for you, and you will see that it blatantly contradicts the guidelines.

I will get on to the substance of the bill. The government's Americanisation of our university system will have a significant impact on the shortages of doctors in our region. I have spoken many times in this place about the impact of these higher education changes, but I would like to bring some new evidence that has recently been published. According to the Medical Journal of Australia, the deregulation of Australia's university system will exacerbate the ongoing doctor shortage in rural areas and will in fact funnel more and more students into metropolitan universities opting to undertake medical specialisation.

Of course specialisation is necessary and important, but just as necessary is the need for general practitioners in Australia's regional hubs, small towns and remote townships. Should the government successfully pass this unfair package of reforms, regional universities, students and communities will suffer. Never mind the minister's afterthought of a structural adjustment package for regional universities—this in itself will not help universities actually meet the demands that they will face and we will continue to see them flounder.

It is widely accepted that students who attend university in the regions are more likely to stay in the regions to work and raise a family following their studies. Given the massive potential in Australia's regions—from mining, agriculture, viticulture, construction, engineering and social and medical services—it is astounding that the government is prepared to walk away from this potential through their deregulation arrangements that will affect regional universities.

We have a world-class system of universities here. Despite what the minister will peddle about us having a mediocre university system, we do not. We have an exceptionally good system—one that is getting better and better. It is time that the minister actually stood up for our universities. It is time that the minister stopped cutting money out of the system. It is time the minister stood up for students and actually recognised that students and those looking to study are the economic powerhouse. They are our intellectual infrastructure of the future and instead of punishing them, deterring them and ensuring that the public good that our
universities and our undergraduate and postgraduate students make to this country is talked down, the minister should start talking it up.

Of course we have seen the mea culpa from the Prime Minister, and it is time that we heard a mea culpa from the Prime Minister and the minister that they will ensure that this legislation does not go ahead, that they will not Americanise our higher education system, that they will not bring in $100,000 degrees, that they will not cut money out of our universities and that they will not cut the important research dollars that go to our universities to develop the technologies and the ideas of the future. Anything less will show that this Prime Minister has not listened to the Australian people, has not listened to his backbench, and that he should be very worried for the future.

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (20:28): I stand in awe of what is being presented here. I am happy to be corrected, but it is my understanding that $6.6 billion was ripped out of the budget for university education by the Labor Party and that we were in a position where we actually had to put corrections in place. At no stage is this Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 planned to destroy our universities; it is an act to keep our universities viable, to reverse the cuts put in place by Labor and to give the universities a chance to be sustainable. The Australian people are confused. The Labor government ripped money from the university sector with absolutely no avenue to survive financially. This is actually pretty typical of those who sit in opposition at this time. There was a grab for funds to fix the budget, and our universities were an unintended consequence: 'Oh, well, I guess the Liberals will fix that; they always do.'

But even in opposition Labor block policy. Misinformation regarding the potential scholarships for young, talented people to attend university is rife. It is being peddled by Labor and being used as a blocking tactic. The equity of access that they promote is being blocked by their actions and misrepresented. Perhaps the whole bill has not been analysed, or perhaps their reading is a little selective, leaving out the fact that their cuts to university funding were enormous and had to be addressed.

In September of last year I rose to commend the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 to the House. While the House agreed to the bill, the Senate did not, refusing a second reading on 2 December. By voting down this bill, the Senate is putting at risk the jobs of 1,700 technical and support staff and the work of up to 35,000 researchers by the cessation of vital research infrastructure funding.

When this bill is passed, the following are some of the benefits: the Australian Research Council Future Fellowships will be awarded, meaning that future top researchers will not have to head overseas or abandon their research careers, creating a brain drain. There will be sufficient funding support for the full range of research priorities, such as the Antarctic Gateway, tropical health research at James Cook University and dementia and diabetes research. My electorate of Gilmore is one of the most senior by average age across Australia. Research funding is crucial for both diabetes and dementia. There are many other members in this House on both sides who would also welcome this research funding.

If this bill is passed by the Senate, it will help secure Australia's place at the forefront of research, with $150 million being allocated in 2015-16 for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, which was mentioned earlier. There is $139.5 million to deliver 100 new four-year research positions per year under the Future Fellowships scheme.
Some examples include $26 million to accelerate research in dementia, $42 million to support research in tropical disease and $24 million to support the Antarctic Gateway Partnership. They are good projects. They will benefit our nation.

This bill is a good bill, with many crucial reforms for Australia and reforms to help guarantee the future of our higher education and tertiary sectors nationwide. We have consulted widely with these stakeholders, and there is a lot of support for the reforms. In December last year, the Regional Universities Network urged the Senate to pass this new bill as soon as possible. They said:

It's not in the interest of students or universities to continue to let this issue drag on.

The network also explained that the bill contains key changes that will, in their words, 'benefit regional students'. Finally, the network wholeheartedly believes that, despite the scare campaign of the $100,000 degrees, this will not be a reality.

We as responsible members of parliament should take note of Universities Australia, who just one week ago pleaded with the senators to pass this bill, saying:

Our appeal to Senators as they return to Canberra is not to ignore the opportunity they have to negotiate with the Government in amending and passing a legislative package that will position Australia's universities to compete with the world's best …

Senators, particularly those on the crossbenches: if you support a better-quality, more competitive higher education system with significant opportunities for rural and regional, disadvantaged and low-socioeconomic-background students, you must support this bill.

On this reform package before the House, let me assure all members that I am 100 per cent in support, particularly because I know from personal experience just how much a cheap loan would have meant to me in my youth. Let me assure the House that I speak on this issue with personal experience in the field of education as a pathway to university. For 10 years I was a high school science teacher, and I was an educator tutor at the University of Wollongong, I also taught high school in the United States as an exchange teacher and was a volunteer teacher in India. The experiences in these countries and in the different levels of education inspired me to see the true value of our own unique education system right here in Australia.

Through this reform package, we will ensure that Australians have a higher education system that ensures equality of opportunity and a chance for every child: the potential to attend university, if that is their choice. For decades to come, the scholarship scheme is a remarkable system. This bill introduces many positive and long-overdue reforms, including the expansion of a demand driven Commonwealth funding system for students studying for higher education diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees, much of which was inaccessible to students in the regions before. It will also extend Commonwealth funding to all Australian students privately studying bachelor courses through other organisations.

Crucially for an area like Gilmore, where youth unemployment is estimated to be over 50 per cent in some of our villages, this bill will allow an opportunity for them to be part of the extra 80,000 students—I repeat: the extra 80,000 students—who could qualify for Commonwealth support. It saddens me that in my electorate of Gilmore only three out of 20 attend university level education. We have one of the lowest participation rates in the country for higher education, so for some of our HSC students this new support scheme is a fabulous opportunity.
However, those of us from rural and regional areas understand that a bachelor's degree is only one option for students. I dare say that the overwhelming majority of jobs in my electorate are not the kind where a bachelor's degree is required, although there is potential for change. Most of our local jobs only require a certificate II, III or IV, and in some cases a diploma or an advanced diploma.

Other major reforms delivered by this bill are the better opportunities for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to get scholarships—and it will be the greatest scholarship scheme we have ever had. If this bill is passed, it will effectively mean free access to education for the brightest students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds Australia wide.

In previous debates on this bill, I explained that, after I completed high school, I was originally accepted to the University of New South Wales in medicine. But at that point, looking at the cost of moving from Woodford in the mountains to the centre of Sydney, as well as the cost of textbooks and other materials, there was no way I could afford such a course, so instead I gratefully accepted a Department of Education scholarship. I gave up the idea of doing some other degree because I simply could not afford it. Can I say that a cheap loan would have been a wonderful opportunity for me.

We are also strengthening the Higher Education Loans Program that sees taxpayer support to all students' tuition fees up-front and ensures that students only repay their loans once they are earning a decent income. No-one needs to pay a cent up-front. We are also removing all fees on FEE-HELP and VET FEE-HELP loans, which are currently imposed on some students undertaking higher education and vocational education and training.

Through wider consultation with external stakeholders and those on the other side and the crossbench, the government has proposed a number of amendments since last introducing the bill. With our amendments, this reform package will see even greater benefits to students. A negotiated outcome is a recognition of the different perspectives that need to be incorporated. Ultimately, if we work together, good governance can be achieved.

As a candidate in the run-up to the September 2013 election, I was not aware of all the unexpected consequences of the Labor decision-making process in the budget overall or university budgets. In fact, I do not think anyone knew what their changes really meant in a budget where the words 'billions of dollars' are tossed around with little regard to the impact. Under Labor, $6.6 billion was removed from the allocations to universities. That is six thousand, six hundred million dollars. That is enormous. How on earth were our universities meant to recover from that cut—no research fellowships, nothing for infrastructure, nothing to help smart, low-socioeconomic students access university education. Seriously, this had the potential to be a huge problem.

Worse still, in April 2013 Labor capped self-education expenses, leaving thousands of nurses, teachers and middle-Australian professionals financially disadvantaged. For a political party that continually extol their support for middle Australia and the importance of research and university education, the actions that they took defy explanation.

Freeing up our higher education system will make it possible for all Australian students to obtain a higher education of world-class quality, rather than see us fall behind in an intensifying global competition for education and jobs.
Labor left a complicated and unwieldy mess, with large increases in regulation, compliance and reporting, unnecessary red tape and regulatory duplication applying to universities. They spent an estimated $280 million a year on compliance. Did you know that part of the costs imposed on universities, that we hope will be removed with this bill, included such ridiculous reporting as: ‘Describe the teaching spaces and their use.’ For example, the universities had to write a report on their science laboratories stating their use. It was for teaching science. For the lecture theatres—what were they used for? Guess what? Lectures for students. Labor’s poor track record, shown in the two independent reviews of regulation and reporting that came out in 2013, was completely ignored. I mean, really! It is such a shame that the general public did not know of such impositions put in place by Labor.

Our international education went somewhat backwards. Export income for our universities fell by billions of dollars from its 2009-2010 peak because of Labor’s neglect. The number of international student enrolments fell by 130,000 students. This represents a decline in enrolments of 16 per cent over that period. That is bad for our economy, for all those who work in education and for all those in the support services such as travel and accommodation.

Many Australian families are not aware that education can be seen as an export. The easiest way to explain this is that the degrees earned in Australia are like a product being manufactured here and sold overseas. Money is earned for Australia from an international source. It is the same for international students studying here in Australia.

There are a whole heap of strong Labor people who have publicly said that the desirability of the Opposition should be in generating a compromise, working through this and getting the deregulation through. The Hon. John Dawkins, the Hon. Maxine McKew and Professor Peter Noonan have all said, ‘Get your act together and work together.’ Former senior Labor minister the Hon. Gareth Evans is a strong advocate of the need for higher education reform, including deregulation. The truth is that the government’s reform package, with amendments, is supported by almost all universities and higher education peak bodies.

Without the additional operational funding, the significant intellectual capital for all of our research places, the expertise built up over nine years of some programs, will dissipate and many people will lose their jobs. This bill allows for the ongoing funding through the Australian Research Council of 100 four-year fellowships each year from 2015. Future Fellowships funds promising mid-career researchers to ensure Australia keeps its internationally competitive researchers now and into the future. Without the passage of this bill, there will be insufficient funding and the program will end.

To conclude, I echo my comments from the last time I spoke and when I commended the original bill, by reminding the House of a simple fact: over the working lifetime of the average university graduate, they are likely to earn significantly more than someone without a degree. Right now we collectively have the chance to open the door of opportunity for so many more of our young Australians and to continue to have a worthwhile income for universities. I strongly urge all honourable senators, especially those on the cross bench, to support this bill for the future of our universities and the future of our nation.

Our job as local MPs is to widen opportunity and give everyone a fair go. That includes the chance to go to university, TAFE or other training organisations, and that is exactly what this bill will achieve. I say again: we have the chance to make the most of our national future and
to help our students to make the most of theirs. So let us open the door of opportunity and encourage this bill to get through the House.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (20:43): I oppose this bill. If there ever was an example of the Abbott government being out of touch, look no further than this rehash of an earlier bill that the people of Australia have overwhelmingly rejected—in particular, the parents of Australia, who see the opportunity for their kids to get a university education being whittled away by this government hell-bent on instituting right-wing policies and allowing the market to take prominence in determining whether or not people go to university in this country.

This set of proposals has been well and truly kyboshed by the Senate. Many senators, particularly those on the crossbenches, have said, 'No matter what form you put these amendments in, we will not pass them because they are bad policy.' But the government is persisting. If you ever wanted a case of the government being out of touch with reality and out of touch with the aspirations of ordinary Australians, look no further than this bill. The government is persisting with a broken promise, a set of reforms that are massively unfair and that make it harder for kids from low- and middle-income families to go to university.

This bill also, in my view, downgrades the value of education within our community. It undermines the value of education as a promoter of productivity and a driver of growth within our economy. We all know that the earlier bill that the minister attempted to introduce, the original Higher Education And Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014, was about to be rejected by the Senate. So the minister rehashed many of the provisions, went away and changed some of them, most notably retaining the current measure for the HELP indexation of debt, namely the consumer price index, rather than utilising the Treasury 10-year bond rate. They also seek to introduce an indexation pause on HELP debts for primary carers of children aged under five who are earning under the minimum repayment threshold.

But what the government does not understand is that the reason Australians, in particular Australian parents, are rejecting these reforms is that they are deregulating fees for university courses in this country. They are allowing the market to determine the cost of a degree for kids in our country. And that says everything about the value that this government places on education and on the ability of kids from low socioeconomic backgrounds to get an education and the role that education can play in driving productivity and growth in our economy. These reforms simply price poor students and students from middle-income backgrounds out of the market. They are unfair but they are also really bad public policy because they speak to the value on which Australia places education.

Finally, this is something that the government said they would not do. The Prime Minister and the Minister for Education specifically said that they would not introduce this style of reform if they were elected. In case the memories of those opposite have faded slightly with the frivolities of summer, I would like to remind them of some of the comments, particularly those of the Prime Minister, in the lead-up to the last election when he said on 1 September 2013 on the Insiders program, 'I want to give people this absolute assurance: no cuts to education.' The Liberal Party's policy document for the last election, Real Solutions—what a wonderful read that would make these days—also states on page 41:

We will ensure the continuation of the current arrangements of university funding.
Then on 17 November 2013, the shadow minister for education, Christopher Pyne, said on *Sky News*:

We want university students to make their contribution but we are not going to raise fees.

Lies damned lies, that is what the government has perpetrated on the Australian people. They are commitments that the Abbott government gave to the young people of Australia prior to the election and they are being broken by the government seeking to introduce this reform into this parliament. They are commitments that the government sought to shirk last year and they are commitments that this government is continuing to shirk this year—an illustration of the fact that they just do not get it; they do not understand the aspirations of ordinary Australians.

The Australian economy is entering a very difficult period. As income from the resources boom begins to dwindle and revenue for the budget begins to dwindle as a result of that, the economy needs to look to areas with growth. Where do Australians need to look for areas with growth? One of those areas is productivity improvement. We need to become a more productive, smarter economy and one that values education, research and development. What does this bill that is before the parliament speak of in terms of values when it comes to education? What does this bill say not only to Australians but to the rest of the world when we talk about how we value education, when we are talking about letting the market determine what students should pay for a university degree in our country? When we are competing against nations, particularly those in Asia-Pacific where our kids will be competing with students of Asian nations in the global jobs market, what are we saying to our students about the way that we value education if these reforms are passed and we are competing against nations where education—and higher education in particular—is encouraged and is provided support by the government?

It is deeply ironic that we have to redebate this bill today. Through its changes to the higher education sector, the government would seek to make tertiary education near impossible for some people from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The desire to widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots infects this government and shows beyond doubt how just how out of touch it is.

I was the first in my family to have the privilege of a university education. In my area, young school students aspire to attend the University of New South Wales. It is one of Australia's leading universities and it is in our community. I had the wonderful privilege to graduate with a degree from the University of New South Wales. I want each and every kid that is currently at school in my community to have that same opportunity. But I know if these reforms are passed that some of those kids, particularly those from middle-income families in my community will simply be priced out of the market. It is ironic that the reason they will be priced out of the market is because of the success of University of New South Wales. It is because the university delivers such quality education and courses in a number of important schools most notably in medicine, in law, in engineering, in science, in commerce and in visual arts. These are courses at the University of New South Wales which are in high demand. Students would give the proverbial to get in to some of those courses. As a result, where the course is in high demand, where you have that demand and you allow the market to set the rate students pay to do one of those courses—what are you going to see happen? You are going to see the costs of those courses skyrocket.
Because the demand is there, the market will set the fee, not the government working in conjunction with the university and providing support for students to ensure that they can have access, regardless of their income, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

The government says: 'The way we will deal with that is to offer Commonwealth scholarships to students from low economic backgrounds so they get the opportunity to participate in some of these courses that are in high demand in quality universities. When I first read the bill and the explanatory memorandum associated with this, I thought: there is some redeeming feature in this bill, in that they are providing Commonwealth scholarships for those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. But, as with everything to do with the Liberal Party, you have to read the fine print. When you read the fine print, you find that the money raised to subsidise these courses, to provide the scholarships for people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, are going to come from—where? From the increasing fees, from the market setting the rates people will pay to go to university, and from the extra money that will be raised—no doubt by people paying more to go to university. That is where the money will come from. That money is going to be used to fund these Commonwealth scholarships. What a farce. What a crime this government is perpetrating on the students of Australia. You ask students to pay more so that they can fund the so-called Commonwealth scholarships for those from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Labor values education. Labor believes in the empowerment of education. Labor believes education is the driver of growth in our economy; it boosts productivity. In his budget reply speech last year, the Labor leader Bill Shorten said:

Only through education will Australia fully develop our economic potential, our scientific potential, our artistic potential—our people's potential.

That is why the Prime Minister's $5 billion cuts to Higher education are so destructive. Since the budget, we have seen that it is not only Labor that opposes the government's unfair and short-sighted higher education package; Australians oppose these measures also. They oppose cutting public funding to undergraduate courses for up to 37 per cent. They oppose the prospect of $100,000 degrees that are likely to be the result from fee deregulation. They oppose the Americanisation of our world-class university system, which would see quality universities charge what they want for courses in high demand, while some of those regional universities where courses are not in high demand will struggle to attract students. Good academics will leave and research dollars will move out, because the market sets the pace when it comes to those factors. Labor believes it is the government's responsibility to fund higher education and research properly, not students who are already paying among the highest fees in the OECD. This is not the way that Labor would approach education policy, and we will fight these unfair plans that the government is seeking to reintroduce into parliament today.

The government has given up on $3½ billion of its $3.9 billion of savings, but it has not fixed the inequity that lies at the heart of this bill. That is because this bill is rotten to the core. It still contains $1.9 billion in cuts to Australian universities. It still contains the prospect of $100,000 dollar degrees for undergraduate students; $171 million in cuts to equity programs; $200 million in cuts to indexation of grant programs; $170 million in cuts to research training; fees for PhD students for the first time ever; $80 million in cuts to the Australian Research
Council. These massive cuts to universities remain. The new fee imposts for students remain. Nothing of substance has changed, and Labor's position remains unchanged.

Despite speculation in recent weeks that the government would give up its budget savings to achieve its ideological goals, this bill still includes massive funding cuts proposed in the budget. It has been roundly criticised. I was blown away when I read a report in the Australian Financial Review some months ago, in which the Australian Medical Association estimated that the cost of a medical degree at a university like the University of New South Wales in our community could skyrocket up to $250,000, a quarter of a million dollars. What hope on earth does a student have—a student coming out of high school, from a low socioeconomic background, from a public housing estate—of meeting a fee like that? That is why this bill is fundamentally unfair and that is why my Labor colleagues and I will fight this bill to the death.

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (20:58): I rise today to support the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014. This is the second time I have supported these higher education reforms. These reforms are vital to securing Australia's competitiveness in the tertiary education sector into the future. Sadly, the Labor opposition simply do not care for or understand the significance of this reform. Their vote to defeat this legislation reinforces their desire to seek short-term political gain over long-term substantial reform benefiting all Australians. Moreover, the Labor opposition have displayed their lack of decency by running a shameful scaremongering campaign designed to discourage students seeking and achieving higher education aspirations. For this they should be ashamed. Opposition to such significant and overdue reform should never derive from the desire to derail a government's agenda and sabotage Australian students' economy and future.

This legislation is well conceived, well intentioned and absolutely necessary to improve the standard of Australia's higher education sector. This legislation will enhance the opportunity for students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and rural and regional areas, to engage in higher education. Importantly, this legislation will help secure Australia's position on the global market as internationally competitive in the provision of world-leading higher education.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (21:00): It being 9 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Pensions and Benefits

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (21:00): I rise today to call upon the government to provide certainty to pensioners in South Australia and reverse their decision to axe funding that provides relief for concession card holders. I am extremely concerned about the impact that this cut will have on concession card holders in southern Adelaide. In last year's horror budget the federal government axed the National Partnership Agreement on Certain Concessions for Pensioner Concession Card and Seniors Card Holders. We are now seeing the impact of this decision on the ground, with the Local Government Association of South Australia reporting that, without ongoing funding, the councils of South Australia will no longer provide concessions on council rates.
As a direct result of the federal government's cuts concession card holders in South Australia will lose up to $190 of their concessions on council rates from July this year. The amount our state of South Australia receives from this agreement is almost equal to the cost of providing relief for concession card holders on council rates. The funding that the Liberal government withdrew from South Australia was approximately $30 million per year, which equalled $123.2 million over four years. There has been a lot of information going around about these cuts but the truth is that the federal government cut covered 96 per cent of the total cost of providing concessions on council rates.

This funding has been over the last many years provided annually by the federal government under a longstanding national agreement with state governments and was not due to expire until June 2016. Unfortunately, the Liberal government broke their agreement with state governments right around this country. This was a sneaky move because it did not need the Senate's approval. After the Liberal government announced this cut last year, the South Australian government funded councils for one additional year, with the hope that the federal Liberal government would see sense and reconsider its decision. Regrettably, this has not occurred.

When speaking with my local community, many people have told me that they are going to struggle to find money for this increase. Many are scared and do not know where they are going to find this extra money each year. My electorate office has also received over 1,000 calls, letters and emails from upset local residents who are extremely concerned about this cut and the impact it will have on them. When describing how she was going to find the extra money, Roslyn from O'Halloran Hill said:

All we can do is cut back on food and go without heating and cooling, when these things are a priority with our age and failing health.

Maria from Reynella said:

I just turned 70 and unable to work to make up any other money to pay the difference in the rates. Please be considerate of people like myself, I do not want to lose my home at this age, I know that I will not be able to pay the full rate price. Please help us.

Gloria from Old Noarlunga said:

I am an 82 year old pensioner and it will cause me real hardship to have my council concession rates cut and taken away. It is hard enough to cope with electricity and gas bills without the government taking the council concessions away. Have a heart.

Robert from Moana said:

Prior to the election, promises were made that pensioners would be no worse off. It is reprehensible that these promises are in the course of being broken.

I know that for many concession card holders every extra dollar counts and this modest concession relief went a long way for those in our local community who are already struggling with the increased cost of living.

My federal Labor colleagues and I, the local government association and the South Australian government have all called on the federal government to reverse this cut urgently. The Liberal government's decision to cut this funding is appalling. It was appalling when the budget was brought down and it is appalling now. It is an attack on those in our community who can least afford it. I will make sure we continue to campaign on this issue and continue
to hold the Liberal government to account. There has been a lot of finger pointing and blame shifting. The fact is that the federal Liberal government broke a longstanding national funding agreement with the states, but it is now the pensioners who will pay the price. The government need to reconsider this cruel cut and honour their agreement to pensioners before their council rates go up on 1 July this year.

Regional Development

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (21:05): Whilst there have been some distractions over the past week or two, work on policy has continued. Tomorrow night will be the culmination of much work by my office, in my capacity as Chair of the Coalition Policy Committee on Infrastructure and Regional Development. This work was inspired by my experiences living in Atlanta, Georgia, as I witnessed the Sun Belt boom as a direct result of improved transport accessibility. I detailed this in my maiden speech, which led to my appointment as chair of the coalition's Sustainable Cities Taskforce. The research and analysis performed by this taskforce exposed the best solution to the malaise that affects inner urban electorates in our largest cities. My electorate of Bennelong enjoys the dubious honour of being home to five of the state's 10 most congested roads. Anyone who regularly commutes on these roads knows the pain shared by thousands on a daily basis.

Governments come and go, and many fall into the trap of developing policy in short-term cycles mirroring our electoral cycles. Whilst we rightly celebrate our democratic institutions, it is this myopic approach to policy development that has led to so many of the ailments affecting our modern-day major cities. An extra lane to a road or the construction of a bicycle shelter is a solution that merely tinkers at the edges of the problem. The real answer needs to be big—based on policy that thinks big.

From my work, I was continually brought back to the same conclusion: that the answer is decentralisation through connectivity. In my maiden speech I cried out, 'Where is our Atlanta?' How can we develop and grow our regional centres to be strong, vibrant, self-sufficient cities? Answering this question will resolve our challenge to ensure Melbourne and Sydney do not become overly congested, crime ridden metropolises like New York and Chicago were in the seventies. Decentralisation occurs through investment in regional development to encourage businesses, and therefore employment opportunities, to relocate because of the significantly lower costs of operation. As the job opportunities grow so do the families, the social institutions, the entertainment and suddenly these regional centres are burgeoning cities offering residents the full suite of general and specialised services.

This growth creates huge increases in property value from a very low base. It is the capture of this value that provides a sustainable funding model to finance the infrastructure that initially created the connectivity and therefore stimulated the regional development. A huge spike in housing development, transport construction and urban renewal leads to a significant net increase in government revenues: capital gains tax, stamp duty and even GST. This money would not make it into the government coffers if the initial infrastructure was not built.

The trick is to accurately estimate the forward projections of this increased revenue to provide the up-front financing commitment or debt guarantee. This concept is known as value capture and operates in a variety of formats across the globe. Tax increment financing is used in 49 of the 50 states of the United States. Betterment levies are providing the funding for the majority of the 14.8 billion pound cost of the London Crossrail project currently under
construction. Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Brazil and South Africa all have value capture systems in place to fund their infrastructure.

Our country has a short history of implementing value capture initiatives to build big infrastructure but not the policy fortitude to reap the full rewards. The construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge was based on a betterment levy predicted to raise one-third of the total construction cost. This was charged to property owners immediately north and south of the bridge, who were expected to benefit most from increased land values on both sides of the harbour. In another example of myopia, the betterment levy was removed after just 15 years, prior to reaching its funding goal, due to local political opposition. And yet those landowners and thousands, if not millions, beyond have benefited exponentially from that connectivity.

Tomorrow night I am hosting a meeting that will feature guest presentations from some of the nation’s foremost experts in this field from the world of business and academia. They will be joined by departmental and ministerial representatives to thoroughly dissect the opportunities available to our nation to help us resolve our infrastructure deficit and catch up with the rest of the world. I look forward to reporting back to the House on the results of this meeting and fulfilling my core duty to the people of Bennelong. (Time expired)

Freedom of Information

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (21:10): I would like to talk tonight a little bit about the freedom from information provisions that we have operating today within the federal government. I must say, as a sort of veteran of some 17 years in the state parliament, I was absolutely stunned at the amazingly devious tricks that are available to our federal agencies in order to avoid any scrutiny whatsoever of their operations. I have been trying since May 2014 to extract some documents on a range of matters of direct interest to the people of Perth and the people of Western Australia. These are documents relating primarily to the Perth Freight Link—a $1.6 billion project in which the federal government is injecting some $925 million. So it is a pretty big project, and you would think it would be one which we would actually have some documents relating to.

I first of all started with the minister, Minister Truss, and I put in an FOI application to his office. But apparently he has truly achieved a paperless and almost computer-less office. The only document that was forthcoming, after an apparently thorough search of his office, was a small email chain showing the great confusion between the state and federal governments about the announcement of this project. It starts off with someone from the Department of Infrastructure saying, 'Oh, Minister Briggs is preparing a visit to Perth tomorrow about the Perth Freight Link.' Then this goes to the main roads department and the main roads department say, 'Guys, does anyone know anything about this?' They forward it onto the state minister's office. The state minister's office says, 'Oh my God, does anyone know about this?' Then finally the chief of staff of the state minister contacts the office of the federal minister and says, 'Are you able to help us out on this one? You want to come over here but we actually do not know anything about it.' But, apparently, in the lead-up to the decision—a decision that predated this event that obviously was a complete surprise to the state government and not mentioned in the state government budget the week before—there was absolutely no documentation. So somehow or other the minister signed off on a project, spending $925 million of federal money, without a single document.
I did not stop there. I thought I would go to Infrastructure Australia and ask them for some documents. Now this is a laugh. This has been going on now, as I say, since May. First of all, they identify a whole heap of documents and come back and say, 'Yes, we have got 84 documents and it is going to cost you this amount of money.' We negotiated and had a bit of argy-bargy around it and I said, 'Okay, I will pay a couple of hundred dollars.' We sent them the money and then they began this long consultation. It goes on for months and months and then they came back, after the end of their consultation, and said, 'We are not going to give you any documents anyhow now. We have decided we are not going to give you any because they are all in the public domain.' But they just alert us to that. They will not send us the decision. We asked them if they could email the decision and they said, 'No, we must post it.' This goes on and it is a month before the determination arrives in the post telling us this. We then said, 'Can you give us a copy of the list and where these things might be in the public domain?' They said, 'No.' After a few more letters, they say, 'Yes', and they basically send us back a list of media releases and reports from the Sydney Morning Herald, which apparently is all they have in their office. So rather than these 84 documents that they originally identified, they have now only got six documents, half of which are press releases and the other half which are articles that have appeared somewhere in the paper. It is just completely and utterly farcical.

At the same time we have gone to the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, and we have—this has been going backwards and forwards. They have identified a lot of documents and they have said they want $2,500 to release these documents. I scaled the thing back: it was only dated from 1 September 2013; only in relation to this project; it did not have to have any raw data. I scaled it right back. They then sent a determination that they were not going to accept this because I wanted this for my personal interest and that this was 'not of interest to members of the public'. A $1.6 billion project—

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (21:16): I have thought long and hard about what I am going to talk about tonight, and I thought I would update the House on a scenario, a situation, that has come through my office. Last year I had a guy come in to see me, and in conversation it became very clear that he was having a great deal of problems with bureaucracy. This was a farmer who did something that his father had done, that his grandfather had done—that is, plough the firebreaks around his farm, but putting it on the road. This is something that had been going on for a long time in his family, but he did not know that on 8 September 2012 those firebreaks had become listed grasslands under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

We have a real problem in this country where our departments have not learnt how to communicate with our farmers. He did something that he thought was the right thing. He thought he was protecting property; he thought, 'We are in a fire prone area'. Instead, he was threatened with an $800,000 fine and seven years imprisonment. He said to me, 'You know, I thought about it but I thought, "No, I'm not going to do it".' I have been head of the Victorian Farmers Federation, I know exactly what he was talking about. He thought the way to save his farm, the way to get away from the $800,000 fine and the seven years in prison was to do himself in, and that was because of the poor communication of our environment department. But he said, no, he is not going to do that.
I looked into the case for him. It was listed on 8 September 2012. In recommendations to the minister dated 28 August 2012 it said, 'You need to work with the local community and raise awareness of the listing'. Nothing was done. There was a fact sheet that came out in December 2012, and if you read through the fact sheet it makes it very clear that farming practices that do not require approval from the Australian government include the following, 'maintaining existing fences, roads, internal access and firebreaks'. So if you read the fact sheet, you can draw the conclusion that he had not done anything wrong.

He ploughed the firebreaks in March and April 2013, so it was five months after the listing. And when you read the very expensive investigation the department has done into him, which I will hazard a guess has cost the Australian taxpayer at least $40,000, the investigation even makes the point that you cannot tell whether those grasslands would be able to be identified as listed or not until spring, until winter, and he ploughed in autumn—and so it continued on.

I thought I would be very wise and I would bring the department down to my office, which I did. I brought down Mr Shane Gaddes, Assistant Secretary for Compliance Enforcement Branch, Department of the Environment, and Mr Drew McLean, acting director of the EPBC compliance section. We suggested that the department use this guy, Mr Trevor Trewin, to do some advertising so that we could talk about it—how he did not know there is this listing—but all they wanted to do was punish him. All they wanted to do was get some kind of fine, some sort of remittance against him. And while they sat there as public servants from Canberra probably on, I am guessing, $600 a day each, he sat there on his time. This is an area, Wycheproof, where they have not had any rain; there is a drought this year. We made sure we pushed the meeting back to February so that Mr Trewin could at least try to get some contract harvesting to get some dollars in.

There are many times that I am very proud to be an Australian, but when our government departments want to nail a guy to the wall for doing something that he did not know was wrong, when they want to threaten a guy to the point that he considers suicide, then we need to look at ourselves—we need to look at how we communicate.

One of the stories in my family history is about a great relative of mine from back in the 1800s. People were going to lynch a guy and my relative stepped in. He cut the rope and he said, 'I will not stand by and watch an innocent man hang'. I think the department needs to look at how it communicates, I think the department needs to look at how it educates landholders and I am very concerned about the heavy-handedness of the environment department in the way it has treated this person. It still has not resolved this case, and I hope it does resolve this. I will be working with the minister to resolve this very shortly.

Kingsford Smith Electorate: Malabar Headland

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (21:21): Malabar Headland is the sacred green shoulder of Maroubra Beach. Beloved by our community, the headland has played host to recreational shooting activities and the Anzac Rifle Range since 1850s. Australian troops since the Boer War have trained on Malabar Headland. The headland is home to the endangered eastern suburbs banksia scrub and the site of significant Aboriginal heritage and cultural artefacts of the Bidjigal people. There are also historical World War II monuments, including the Malabar Battery, a coastal defence battery built in 1943.
Malabar Headland is the last remaining tract of native bushland between Sydney Harbour and Botany Bay. It must be preserved; it must be handed back to the people of Australia. It is an important community asset that must be protected and handed back to the public as national park and public parklands. I, like many in our community, grew up exploring, riding bikes and playing around Malabar Headland, enjoying its natural beauty, and I want my children to have that same privilege. In August of 2010 Prime Minister Julia Gillard and my predecessor, former member for Kingsford Smith Peter Garrett, announced that Malabar Headland would be returned to the people as national park and public parklands. Since that time Labor worked to ensure that that process was brought to fruition, to ensure that that plan was made a reality. Labor in government remediated the western portion of Malabar Headland at a cost of $2 million, and in March 2012 that 70 hectare segment became national park. It was handed back to the people of New South Wales as, and protected as, national park. We remediated the eastern portion of the headland—out behind the target range, next to the coastline—at a cost of $11 million, making it ready to be handed back to the people as a national park. Work on a leachate drain on both the northern and southern sides of the headland was carried out to alleviate seepage from the headland, which for two decades, from 1968 to 1988, was a public landfill site.

Labor negotiated with licence holders to vacate the land to allow remediation work to begin on the headland's largest central portion. We allocated funding in the budget and got on with the plan to return the headland to the people—to create public parklands and continue the wonderful coastal walkway around the headland to ensure that people can walk from Bondi to Botany Bay unimpeded, along Sydney's beautiful coastline. But when the Abbott government was elected the progress Labor was making came to a halt. They commissioned a secret plan for the development of Malabar Headland, a plan that was only revealed in The Sydney Morning Herald on 22 January this year after a freedom of information request was put in by the Herald. The report itself was heavily redacted but some of the quotes are illuminating. One of them states that the actual return is dependent on the extent of the lot which is made available for development, and that the upper level of estimated return is based on 48 hectares of the site being made available for development and the Commonwealth undertaking remediation of the site prior to divestment.

That was the government's secret plan, commissioned earlier on in the process of this government, and delivered in September 2014—so the government has sat on this plan since that time. Needless to say, the community was fiercely opposed to this. Member for Maroubra Michael Daley and I joined with community groups, including the Friends of Malabar Headland, to stand against the push for development. The Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, then declared that the government would not proceed with the development of the headland—despite the fact that they had spent all this money on this report. But, given their history on the headland, the government's words are hollow. It is time for action. The Abbott government must allocate money in the budget to continue remediation, and to continue Labor's work and its plan to return the headland to the people. In the meantime, the Friends of Malabar Headland should be allowed back onto the eastern portion of the headland to continue their bush regeneration work with the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub. I, Michael Daley and members of our community will work towards ensuring that this headland is protected from development and returned to the people as parkland. (Time expired)
Economy

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (21:26): Tonight I would like to speak directly to my constituents of McMillan and to the people of Australia—the people of this great south land, so precious to us all. If a farmer gets into trouble with debt and begins to fail to meet commitments or owes some money around the community, they do not take the issue to the bank. Eventually the crisis becomes so great that they lose the farm. The other day a friend said to me, 'Do you realise, the way we are going, our children and their children are not going to enjoy the living standards that we have all enjoyed?' It does not matter what commentator you speak to about long-term issues in this country, we have economic issues that are going to affect our family farm—that being this nation. Yet there are politicians in this place who are prepared to trash the Australian economy; they are prepared to trash anything the government tries to do to repair our economy for the long term.

People talk about there being a crisis. Do we have a crisis today? No, I do not think we have a crisis today but everybody talks about a structural problem going into the future. It is a way of hiding a situation that is exactly the same as that farmer. Every month, every year, that we put off changing what we are doing as a nation we are putting it on the next generation and the next generation of politicians to address the issues facing this nation. The Labor Party can trash everything the government has tried to do—it is their right to oppose—but they are even trashing those cuts and policies that they had in place which were beginning to reduce the deficit. Why is it that in this day and age, at this time, we are going to have this parliament put off the decisions that need to be made on behalf of this country for pure, base politics and for no other reason? For the next 18 months, until the next election, the Labor Party, not the crossbenchers, are prepared to oppose everything that the government puts forward for the benefit of this nation. Think about your children and their children—they are the ones that are going to reap the sadness of what I am putting to the House tonight. It is inconceivable that for pure political reasons we are prepared to put off the inevitable. The day will come when the crisis is of such grandeur that the jolt will be far greater for the whole of society than it would be if we began to work together today to repair these budget issues.

I finish the day on a sad note: the future of the country is not in good hands with the parliaments of today. I began the day at the Baptist Church with a feeling of great hope and opportunity and prayers for the nation. My disappointment is that the politicians of this nation are letting our people down. We are letting our children down and we are letting their children down as well. We need to address the things that are important so that the speeches in this House that you have heard, even from members tonight about the environment, are heeded and we leave a better place, a better environment and a stronger economy for our children and their children.

The SPEAKER: It being 9.30, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 21:31

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Ms Parke to move:
That this House:
(1) notes:
(a) that two Australians, Mr Myuran Sukumaran and Mr Andrew Chan, are presently imprisoned in Kerobokan prison in Indonesia and are facing execution for the crime of drug trafficking;

(b) the serious nature of Mr Sukumaran’s and Mr Chan’s crimes, befitting lengthy prison terms as just punishments for them;

(c) Australia’s abolition of capital punishment, the international trend away from capital punishment, and the success of Indonesia’s efforts to save the lives of its own citizens sentenced to death in foreign jurisdictions;

(d) the genuine remorse demonstrated by Mr Sukumaran and Mr Chan and their efforts at rehabilitation and reform in Kerobokan prison, not only for themselves but also for other prisoners; and

(e) the widespread support of the Australian people for the commutation of the death sentences for Mr Sukumaran and Mr Chan to lengthy prison sentences, as shown in the recent campaigns across the country calling for mercy to be shown to them; and

(2) calls on Indonesia to:

(a) give consideration to the circumstances of Mr Sukumaran and Mr Chan and their rehabilitation in prison, their suffering and that of their families, and commute their sentences to an appropriate term of imprisonment; and

(b) implement the decision of the Indonesian Constitutional Court in the 2007 case of Ms Edith Sianturi, Mr Scott Rush and others, which recommended that the death penalty should no longer be the primary form of punishment in Indonesia, and that it should be able to be imposed with a prohibition period of ten years, so that if the prisoner shows good behaviour, it can be amended to a lifelong sentence or imprisonment for 20 years.

Mrs Prentice to move:

That this House:

(1) congratulates the Government on honouring its election commitment to change indexation arrangements for Defence Forces Retirement Benefits and Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits military pensions;

(2) condemns the $17 billion in cuts made to the Australian Defence Force (ADF) under the former Labor Government to its lowest level since before World War II;

(3) recognises:

(a) that those budget cuts caused job losses among the 3000 small and medium businesses which service the ADF; and

(b) the extra risk placed on Australian service personnel by Labor’s failure to purchase new artillery;

(4) condemns the cuts by the former Labor Government to entitlements of unmarried soldiers for flights to see their families;

(5) recognises the depletion in force readiness caused by Labor’s reckless decision to cut reserve training days by up to 30 percent; and

(6) repudiates the decision to cut funding to the Australian War Memorial.

Mrs Prentice: to move:

That this House:

(1) celebrates the release of Mr Peter Greste by the Egyptian Government;

(2) commends the Greste family on its courage, resilience and grace for more than 400 days;

(3) congratulates the Australian Foreign Minister and Prime Minister on their unrelenting pursuit of Mr Greste’s cause;
(4) commends the efforts of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Egypt under the direction of Mr Justin Brown and Ambassador Dr Ralph King;

(5) thanks the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry for their role in Mr Greste's release;

(6) calls for the immediate release of Mr Greste's colleagues, Mr Baher Mohamed and Mr Mohamed Fadel Fahmy;

(7) recognises the many thousands of ordinary Australians and others around the world that showed their support to the Greste family during the past year; and

(8) notes that 'Telling the truth is not terrorism and Journalism is not a crime'.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiteley) took the chair at 10:29.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Uren, Hon. Thomas, AC

Sydney Electorate: Millers Point

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10:29): A few weeks ago, we said goodbye to one of Sydney’s great champions, former Minister for Urban and Regional Development in the Whitlam government, Tom Uren. Tom was a dear friend of mine. Tom’s passionate commitment to our urban environment has left an enduring legacy in the preservation of our heritage through such steps as the establishment of the Australian Heritage Commission, through the conservation of Sydney Harbour foreshore and through his vision for the restoration and invigoration of working class, inner city areas. As Sydney’s representative in the federal parliament, I am particularly conscious of just how much we owe Tom. The face of our city and the survival of the working class communities within inner city areas are down to Tom. We no longer have Tom to fight for the heritage, the diversity and the communities of Sydney. But the fight does, and must, go on.

Right now, one of the oldest working class communities in Sydney, Millers Point, is under threat by a state Liberal government which is putting profit before people. The Millers Point community has its roots in the 19th century in the boom and bust years that led to the Great Maritime Strike in the 1890s. It sits above the Hungry Mile where workers used to queue to be allowed to work for a few hours on the docks. Bound together by shared labour, shared values and shared hardship for more than a century, Millers Point is a unique and tightly-knit community. It has residents who have lived for four generations in the one home, whose families have been there for more than 100 years. It is a vital part of our city’s living history.

It has always been a source of great pride for me as the member for Sydney that our magnificent harbour city is not closed to the poor or to the working class, that we have public housing in the heart of our great city and that we do not push less wealthy residents to the fringes of the city. The community at Millers Point is an important part of our diverse, vibrant Sydney. Its destruction would be short-sighted, hard-hearted and wrong. These proposed moves are causing the residents of Millers Point great stress. The fear that they have about being moved out of the community they know, away from neighbours they are familiar with, away from health services and other vital community services that they depend on has been enormously stressful. One of the great things about our city, one of the things that distinguishes it from any other major capitals around the world, is the diversity of its communities. You see that particularly in Millers Point. You see it in Glebe and in Woolloomooloo. You see it in those areas that Tom, as the former Minister for Urban and Regional Development, made it his particular priority to protect.

Hinkler Electorate

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (10:32): I would like to welcome my colleagues on both sides back to Canberra and wish them all the very best for 2015. I had a busy few months during the parliamentary break.
In the lead-up to Christmas, Hinkler residents were paying through the nose for petrol while those in the city enjoyed dramatically reduced prices. With crude oil prices dropping by 40 per cent since June, in regional Australia major fuel retailers like Coles and Woolworths were enjoying record profits of up to 30c per litre in some cases. I recognise prices are not something government can control. But on 11 December, I wrote to Minister Bruce Billson to express my concern that the ACCC was not meeting its obligation to protect consumers from unfair commercial practices at the bowser. A Woolworths spokesperson admitted to the Fraser Coast Chronicle that they only reduce their prices when other stations drop theirs. As a result, on 17 December Minister Billson issued a new direction to the ACCC under section 95ZE of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010. The ACCC will now conduct at least four investigations a year into specific geographic markets and produce monitoring reports on a quarterly basis. I have asked that Hinkler be considered as a location for one of these.

Last week, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, as part of a joint operation with the Queensland Police Service, located and detained eight people working illegally. I have been working on this issue for some time in close consultation with Ministers Keenan, Abetz and Cash. Allegations and complaints made to my office range from the underpayment and exploitation of workers to tax evasion, visa breaches, racial discrimination, intimidation of farmers and overcrowding of private residential dwellings.

Almost all of those who attended the forum that Senator Barry O'Sullivan and I hosted last year agreed that further red tape and regulation would only add unnecessary costs and time pressures for employers who do the right thing. They argued that greater enforcement of the existing laws was desperately needed. I am grateful my ministerial colleagues are listening and taking action. Last week's operation should act as a deterrent for anyone considering breaking employment and migration laws. I will continue to work with the Hinkler community, the horticultural and tourism industries and my ministerial colleagues to see that this problem is properly addressed. It is imperative that we ensure our employers and seasonal workers are protected, that businesses have a level playing field and that Australia remains a destination of choice for overseas students and holiday-makers.

In 2015, I will also continue to focus my energies on addressing the exorbitant cost of electricity in Queensland. At the National Party's first party meeting room for the year, we identified several key priorities for regional Australia in 2015. These include protecting primary producers and small business from unfair practices by the major supermarket chains; developing a regional youth policy, providing them with jobs and training opportunities; and continuing our push to improve telecommunications services, including the NBN, in rural Australia. I look forward to working with a steadfast, united National Party team in 2015 to ensure regional Australia gets its fair share.

Queensland State Election

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (10:35): Today I would like to acknowledge the election of a new state Labor team in the northern suburbs of Brisbane. I am sure they will work hard across our northern suburbs to ensure that working families will get a fair go. Congratulations to Stirling Hinchcliffe, Leanne Linard, Dr Anthony Lynham and Yvette D'Ath.

It is appropriate on a day such as this, a day when the Liberal Party makes itself the centre of attention yet again, that we focus on the lessons the Australian people are trying to teach them—if only they would listen. Over the last few days and weeks we have heard Liberal
None of them has come even close to a credible explanation. Of course, if we look to Queensland that explanation is staring them in the face. What we saw in Queensland from Cape York to the Tweed was that Queenslanders gave an emphatic rejection of the trickle-down economics practised by Premier Newman and Prime Minister Abbott. Both brazenly lied about cuts before the election, were elected and then imposed those cuts, particularly in health and education. Of course, once they came to office, they sought to camouflage all of that by talking down our economy. The result has been a dramatic drop in consumer sentiment and business confidence, weaker growth and, of course, higher unemployment.

The response of the conservative establishment across the nation to this electoral earthquake was to not admit what the cause of all this is—that is, the unfair policies at the heart of both the Newman government and the Abbott government, their bungled budgets and their failure to accurately describe and deal with the economic challenges we face as a nation. They and their conservative barrackers in the media screeched that reform is now impossible rather than acknowledge that it is the unfairness of the changes they are putting in place that is the cause of the electoral earthquake and the rejection of the Liberal Party—state and federal.

There are plenty of reforms that voters will support—reforms which will drive growth and where the benefits are shared fairly. The problem with Mr Abbott and Mr Newman is that their only vision is division. Savage cuts to the social safety net, lower taxes and lower wages are not reform. They are trickle-down economics, which internationally have produced a concentration of wealth at the top, an army of working poor and, of course, a hollowing out of the middle class.

They are not listening to this message. The issue here is not the jockey. It is the nag that they are riding: the nag that wants to kill off Medicare; the nag that wants to make university education inaccessible to working families; the nag that divides our nation into lifters and leaders; and the nag that is ridden by a jockey whose ideals are more with medieval England than with modern Australia. (Time expired)

Macarthur Electorate: National Volunteer Awards

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (10:38): I rise today to congratulate the nominees and award recipients of the Macarthur 2014 National Volunteer Awards. The National Volunteer Awards recognise the amazing work and efforts undertaken by members of a local community—those who are the heart and soul of our community. In December last year I was extremely proud to announce that there were over 70 volunteers and organisations nominated in Macarthur across 14 categories. Today I want to pay tribute to these special people and thank them for their time and commitment to volunteering in my electorate.

I bring to the attention of the House 14 deserving National Volunteer Award winners for the Macarthur region: the winner of the Junior Volunteer Award, Danielle Santos; the winner of the Youth Volunteer Award, Nicholas Palmer; the joint winners of the Senior Volunteer Award, Vic Boardman and Marian Martin; the winner of the Business Volunteer of the Year Award, Marina Mikulic, owner of Symphony's on Argyle Street in Camden; the winner of the Education Volunteer Award, the Rural Fire Service, Macarthur Zone community education team; the winner of the Emergency Management Award, Christopher Wright; the winner of the Environment Volunteer Award, Stephen Cooper; the winner of the Innovation in Volunteering Award, Macquarie Fields TAFE certificate III design technology team; the
winner of the Long-term Commitment to Community Service Award, Phil Vale; the winner of the New Organisation Volunteer Award, Sector Connect Volunteer Light Rigid Drivers Project; the winner of the Volunteering in Sport Award, South West Sydney Academy of Sport volunteers; the winner of the Volunteering Organisation Award, Focus on Families; and the winner of the School Volunteer Award, Terri Anderson.

Finally I would like to congratulate the 2014 Macarthur Volunteer of the Year Award winner, Adam Taiba. Over the past year Adam has played an instrumental role in raising awareness amongst young people about the consequences of alcohol-fuelled violence. After his father, as I understand it, was king-hit in September 2013, Adam started a campaign to spread the message to students across Macarthur about the dangers, effects and consequences of alcohol. This involved visiting local schools to speak on the issue, helping the New South Wales police commissioner with Operation Unite and raising the issue face-to-face with the Premier, Mike Baird. In the face of his own family's adversity, Adam has channelled his energy into finding positive community solutions to alcohol-fuelled violence. His commitment to raising awareness of alcohol-fuelled violence amongst young people sets an outstanding example. The way that Adam has approached this campaign has been inspirational to all those who have seen him in action in our community.

I congratulate Adam and all the nominees and award recipients for the Macarthur 2014 National Volunteer Awards. I would also like to thank our nominators and all the volunteers throughout Macarthur for the wonderful work they do in our community. We really do cherish what they do.

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Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (10:41): This afternoon members of this House will be honoured to attend the last post ceremony at the Australian War Memorial, now run by the very competent former Leader of the Opposition and former Ambassador to NATO, Brendan Nelson, which has come to mark the beginning of the parliamentary year. It is particularly significant this year, which is the centenary of the landings at ANZAC. The ceremony will be dedicated to the decision makers of the nation 100 years ago as well as the thousands of Australians who paid the ultimate sacrifice in World War I. It is good that bipartisanship marks the commemoration of service of Australian troops both in the past and today.

On 19 October 1914 the first Australian troopship left from Victoria—from Port Melbourne in my electorate—to send the troops to fight in the First World War—for training in Egypt and Lemnos and then landing at Gallipoli. I am very proud our centenary grants have involved the local Turkish community in a special memorial that the Australian Turkish community is creating to those events, and with the Australian Greek community in a memorial for the very significant training by the ANZACs that took place in Lemnos. That day of departure from Port Melbourne was very iconic for Australia. Pictures of that departure from Port Melbourne adorn the wall of practically every RSL in Australia.

Port Melbourne in those days was pivotal to the war effort. Melbourne was the capital of Australia, and war materials were shipped from Port Melbourne to the far side of the world. 126,000 servicemen embarked from Port Melbourne. More than 19,000 out of the 60,000 who died in the First World War were from Victoria. My grandfather John Peek, later commissioned lieutenant, left for training in Egypt and landed in the first reinforcement at
Gallipoli. He got his commission—proudly framed at home on our wall—on the battlefield in France, just as General Sir John Monash did.

Gallipoli continues to impact on Australia—especially how Australians see themselves. Indeed, Russell Crowe's directorial debut, *The Water Diviner*, also shows us to the world. Crowe's film was particularly sensitive and particularly typical of modern Australia that a greater understanding of our Turkish friends is emblematic of that film. If I may say so, I believe that the great Turkish actor Yılmaz Erdoğan stole the show. He was by far the best actor in that wonderful production, which I urge people to go and see. The evocation of life in Turkey and the postwar difficulties there is very important for Australians to understand. I pay tribute to Brendan Nelson. This is a wonderful way to begin the centenary of Gallipoli.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiteley): The honourable member's time has expired and we thank him for the Oscars precursor!

Durack Electorate: Kimberley Group Training Skills Centre

Ms PRICE (Durack) (10:44): The nominees are! Today my words are what I consider to be both sweet and sour. In November, I officially opened the Kimberley Group Training Skills Centre in Kununurra. This is a $2 million project which was born out of sheer long-term frustration. Young people in Kununurra and surrounds, predominantly Indigenous youth, who were applying for apprenticeships and traineeships were essentially and basically unsuitable and unemployable due to poor literacy, numeracy and life skills. We know this is not uncommon—we hear this frequently—but what concerns me is that we have built a new skill centre, in this case in Kununurra, against a background where education and training efforts up to this point have failed these young people in the Kimberley. How disappointing it is that we as a society and as a government have had no choice but to insert another layer into the education and training stratum. Let me list them. We have preschool, primary school and secondary school; now we have another layer, called skills training, which prepares the young or the older person to enable them to participate in an apprenticeship or traineeship. I sincerely hope that the new training centre in Kununurra is successful. It is certainly different and trying very hard to overcome the failures of the past with this approach.

Moving on, the purpose of the Kimberley Group Training Skills Centre is to provide a creative and culturally appropriate service combining industry knowledge and intensive and individualised literacy and numeracy tuition, preparing graduates of the centre for apprenticeships, traineeships or direct employment. The centre's primary focus is on unemployed people who have poor education levels and have been dependent on welfare. The training includes life skills and work readiness, with the first intake in Kununurra doing a course in hospitality and mechanical workshop. This training, however, is not accredited and it is hoped that, upon completion of the program, the young people, and also many mature aged men and women, will be equipped to take up the many opportunities available in the hospitality industry within the Kimberleys, either as trainees, as apprentices or simply as employees. Of course, this is something to monitor closely.

At the opening of the centre, noting that the federal government contributed half a million dollars, it was encouraging to see the local service providers in Kununurra getting on board. They need employees and are, therefore, investing in the new facility and the local people. I acknowledge John Gummery, who is the CEO of Kimberley Group Training, and Chairman Mr Peter Stubbs for their perseverance, vision and good work in bringing this skills centre to
fruition. As an aside, I sincerely hope that the WA state government will continue to support the group training organisations beyond 2014-15, including Kimberley Group Training.

**Adams, Mr Victor Joseph**

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (10:47): On the last day of 2014, Canberran Victor Joseph Adams died aged 68. Vic was a proud veteran who served in Vietnam as the commander of the 1st Platoon A Company 2RAR. He was committed to his military mates and to social justice, which he expressed through his activism in the Labor Party, Amnesty International and other organisations. Vic was a great campaigner for Mike Kelly in Eden-Monaro in the 2007 and 2010 federal elections. He lived an extraordinary life, as was outlined at his very moving funeral service, at Norwood Park Crematorium on 8 January. Eulogies were delivered by Ross Ellis, Phil Evenden, Anthony Adams and Mike Kelly, and some beautiful pieces of music were played, by Leonard Cohen, Simon and Garfunkel and Three Dog Night, from among Vic's beloved music.

It was noted that he had represented the United Nations at Anwar Sadat's funeral and that he had been a great prankster in his times in Vietnam. The story of his falling into a latrine trench had the assembled mourners in stitches. Mike Kelly told of how Vic had campaigned for him in Eden-Monaro, including a moment where his car slid off the road and into a ditch—Vic's, not Mike's, that is. Mike said that Vic was such an inveterate letter writer that he wondered now, after Vic's passing, whether *The Canberra Times* would be worth reading any longer. It was noted that Vic believed in social justice and believed in the Labor Party. That did not mean that he always thought the Labor Party was right about everything. He frequently expressed to me issues on which he thought we could do better. It is a great reminder that political parties, not just the Labor Party, are perfectible beasts, but the Labor Party was Vic's party and he always fought to make it better, whether that meant writing a letter to a local newspaper or coming out to help me on one of those sub-zero mornings in the Civic bus interchange, engaging with constituents in the 2010 and 2013 elections.

He was a great supporter to me and I will miss him dearly. Vic was somebody you knew you could always count on for support and you knew you could always count on for ideas. I offer my condolences to his wife, Lynette, to his children, Anthony and Kelley and to the many friends of Vic throughout the labour and union movement, whose lives will be changed by his passing.

**Gilmore Electorate**

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (10:51): Gilmore is in the lucky position of being a coastal rural region. Over the summer period there are surf carnivals with places such as Mollymook Beach being selected for the 2015 Stramit NSW Country Surf Life Saving Championships and Kiama hosting the Surf Life Saving South Coast Branch Championships, as well as Shellharbour hosting the surf lifesaving club Australian Surf Rowers League Championships later this month—truly spectacular. At each of these carnivals, our youth show their commitment to training, over and above their amazing number of volunteer hours patrolling the beaches to keep our thousands of South Coast visitors safe between the flags.

Our regional excellence goes beyond the coastal strips to our agricultural wealth. Congratulations to the committees of all show societies: Kiama, Berry, Nowra, Kangaroo Valley and Milton, with David Young from Kiama, Peter Hands from Berry, Wendy
Woodward OAM from Nowra, David Kent from Kangaroo Valley and Robert Davis from Milton all serving their communities as presidents of our local show societies.

There has been a continuing and growing enthusiasm to introduce our young children to our shows, some of which have been a constant fixture in our local communities for over 150 years. You might say this is just for entertainment, and while many of us diligently wrap coloured bands around wrists as they come through the gates, that simply is not the main part of any show. It is a place to inspire the arts and crafts, the spinners and weavers, the photographers and painters, the jam makers, the pickle producers, the flower growers and the vegetable growers. There are competitions for cakes and eggs, chooks and cows, and the list goes on.

The schoolchildren visiting, their faces alive with curiosity and the essence of the agricultural show, is always one of the highlights. They learn about hay bailing, cow milking, growing things, and above all they reconnect with all of the activities that are part of the historic essence of our region. One of the themes is to create an awareness in the community about the need to retain, maintain and sustain our agricultural assets. The school visits are an essential part of this.

In the showgirl competition, which some may scoff at and think old-fashioned, the young women explore a part of their local environment they perhaps had never ventured into before. Traditionally, the showgirls were young women of the land, but this has been expanded. The result is that these young women are opening their eyes to the need for our agriculture to be known and seen as a very significant part of Australian life. Thank you to everyone for attending and helping to organise sponsoring—each one being part of the overall success.

Finally, let me describe the absolute rapture that can be seen on the faces of those standing around the ring during the fireworks display or other fascinating competition events—from babies to tired toddlers, families and the elderly, with their uplifted faces looking at the flares and flashes. For that instant, they are carefree and the happiness is clear to everyone.

**Australia Day Honours: Batty, Ms Rosemary 'Rosie'**

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (10:54): I rise today to congratulate Rosie Batty on being named Australian of the Year for 2015. Sadly, her role as a spokesperson has been thrust upon her in the most tragic of circumstances. Through her bravery, Rosie Batty has given a voice to the millions of Australians who have experienced family violence. Her passion and determination to share her story, and to bring an end to family violence, is truly commendable.

The community has reacted strongly to Rosie's story. People are finally beginning to recognise the prevalence of the issue of family violence in our community. The failure of our system to provide Rosie Batty with the assistance that she so clearly needed has strongly affected the Australian public. It is time to take action to protect the women and children who are so desperately in need of support.

At this point it is worth noting, not in a partisan sense, but to put on the record that Rosie Batty has expressed her disappointment with recent cuts to family violence support services. It is not a political issue, but the reality of our job is that what we do in this chamber is about prioritisation. Policy change on this issue, despite having bipartisan support, has been undermined by the recent cuts of $300 million to social services, which mean that women and
children will be unable to leave violent relationships, and if they do they will not get the support that they need. We need to recognise that demand for these services is increasing, and in this place in particular, we need to be actively looking to lead change and provide funding to respond effectively to this issue.

Rosie Batty has spoken publicly about the need for long-term approaches to addressing family violence and gender inequality. We know that family violence disproportionately affects women. We know that it affects women's health, financial security and their ability to engage in the workforce. In responding to violence against women, we are not only talking about how to support victims in response to perpetrators of family violence, we are also talking about the need to focus on how to tackle the broader issue of gender inequality so that the root cause of family violence can be addressed.

Rosie Batty is a remarkable woman and we thank her for her strength and courage in coming forward and speaking publicly about her experiences. Sadly, the majority of victims of family violence are either not able to, due to the tragic circumstances of their life, or do not feel empowered to speak up and seek help. Many have suffered from a cycle of abuse to the extent that they lack self-esteem, blame themselves and do not seek assistance. There are millions of Australian women and children who have come to accept control and fear as a way of life. It is not an issue that has a simple solution. Responding to family violence requires a long-term concerted effort towards social and systemic change from all leaders in our community. There is much that still needs to be done. We need to address the widespread damaging effects of family violence across all spheres of Australian life. It is time to make this issue a real priority. It is time for all of us to take Rosie's lead and take action on this important issue that affects millions of Australians every day.

Sitting suspended from 10:57 to 11:31

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (11:31): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, which aims to raise awareness among Australian women of the symptoms of ovarian cancer; and
(b) each year 1400 Australian women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and more than 1000 will die from the disease—that is one woman every 8 hours;

(2) notes with concern that the prognosis for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer is generally poor due to the advanced stage of most ovarian cancers at the time of diagnosis;

(3) acknowledges that there is no screening program or detection test for ovarian cancer, and that the Pap smear will not detect the disease;

(4) recognises that:

(a) ovarian cancer is not a silent disease and that all women experience symptoms, even in the early stages of the cancer; and
(b) the four most common symptoms are:

(i) abdominal or pelvic pain;
(ii) increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating;
(iii) needing to urinate often or urgently; and
(iv) difficulty eating or feeling full quickly;
(5) understands that every Australian woman needs to know the symptoms of ovarian cancer; and
(6) notes the need for greater focus on education and additional research funding to help Australian scientists to find early detection markers and more effective treatments for this disease.

February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. It is an illness that not many people really understand. Over a quarter of Australians know somebody who has been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Only half of Australians know that ovarian cancer exhibits some significant symptoms. According to a recent study 1,400 Australians are diagnosed with ovarian cancer and over 1,000 of those will die. Ovarian cancer has the lowest survival rate of any women's cancer. Only 43 per cent of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer will be alive five years after diagnosis, in comparison to breast cancer, where a five-year survival rate is 89 per cent. Over half of Australians still wrongly believe that a Pap smear can be used to detect ovarian cancer, and a third believe that most women diagnosed with ovarian cancer will survive.

The study also showed that women over the age of 50 were most commonly affected by ovarian cancer—although that does not preclude young women from developing ovarian cancer. I will talk about one such young woman in a moment. Around one-third of the respondents incorrectly believed that the human papilloma virus vaccine would protect them against ovarian cancer—not true. Only one in 10 Australians knew that the oral contraceptive pill actually reduces the risk of ovarian cancer. This is least well known among women aged over 50, with only five per cent of that age group responding correctly. Without early detection, without understanding or recognising the signs, ovarian cancer is a death sentence.

As I mentioned, February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. In awareness month we need to focus on those symptoms which, if experienced by women, are an indication of ovarian cancer. The four key symptoms of ovarian cancer include abdominal and pelvic pain, increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating, the need to urinate often or urgently and a feeling of being full after you have eaten. So it is a disease that has subtle symptoms. Unless a person is really attuned to those symptoms and aware of those symptoms, they will not notice them. As I mentioned earlier, it has the lowest survival rate of any women's cancer.

I am sure every person in this chamber today knows somebody who has died from ovarian cancer. I had a very close friend who died a few years ago from ovarian cancer. Jeannie Ferris, a senator in this parliament, died of ovarian cancer. Recently I attended an ovarian cancer function with Carol Bear, whose daughter Kylie was only in her 30s when she died of ovarian cancer. She has developed a very positive way of trying to perpetuate Kylie's memory. Kylie was a member of the Marching Koalas in the Hunter region. She was a very bright young woman who had just been married. Carol is making bead bracelets in Kylie's memory.

There is no easy recognition of ovarian cancer, and there is a need for greater awareness. There is a need for more research. I would like to encourage every member in this house today to have an ovarian cancer afternoon tea. February is the month when this happens. I am actually holding one on Friday, 7 March. I encourage members to go back to their electorates and have one of these afternoon teas to raise awareness of ovarian cancer.
Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (11:36): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Shortland and to lend my voice to raise awareness to save lives and provide support to those impacted by ovarian cancer. Ovarian cancer is the sixth most common cause of cancer death affecting women in Australia. February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Throughout this month Ovarian Cancer Australia, the peak national body for ovarian cancer, will campaign to highlight the symptoms of ovarian cancer, to honour women who have lost their battle against this deadly disease, and to raise vital funds to support essential educational, support and advocacy programs.

Each year approximately 1,400 Australian women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Tragically, more than 1,000 Australian women die from this disease each year. Statistics from the New South Wales department of health show that between 2004 and 2008 the incidence rate of ovarian cancer on the Central Coast was 1.5 per cent higher than for the rest of New South Wales. During this period, sadly, 120 Central Coast women were diagnosed with this disease. Tragically, ovarian cancer's high mortality rate is due to the absence of a proven screening test.

Doctors who suspect ovarian cancer are able to perform a number of tests, including blood tests and ultrasounds, to assist making a diagnosis. Invasive surgery is the only definitive way to diagnose ovarian cancer. Blood tests may be used to monitor the CA 125 protein. This protein will be higher than normal in women with ovarian cancer. Other tumour markers called inhibin or CEA may also be present. But not all tumours will show in signs of these markers. Therefore, obtaining a diagnosis is a challenging task. In addition to blood tests, ultrasounds can be used to visually identify the presence of ovarian cancer.

The prognosis for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer is generally poor, due to the advanced stage of the cancer at the time of diagnosis. An individual's prognosis depends on the type and stage of the cancer as well as the woman's age and general health at the time of diagnosis. The overall five-year survival rate for Australian women diagnosed with ovarian cancer is approximately 43 per cent. If the cancer is able to be treated when it is still confined to the ovaries, 93 per cent of patients will be alive in five years. Sadly, we see a significant drop in survival rates if the cancer spreads to surrounding tissues or organs, with only 39 per cent of women surviving this disease.

During Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, it is essential that we highlight the symptoms and available treatment options. Unfortunately, for many women no symptoms present, or symptoms may be non-specific and include: persistent abdominal, pelvic or back pain; increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating; the need to urinate often or urgently; and fullness after food, weight loss and loss of appetite.

Every woman should be mindful of ovarian cancer and should be aware of these symptoms. Treatment options are dependent on the severity of the cancer. Surgery is used to determine the extent of the disease. When it is localised, surgery is used as a primary treatment. If the cancer has spread, surgery aims to remove as much as possible and this is followed by chemotherapy. While we do not know the cause of most cases of ovarian cancer, research continues both in Australia and abroad. In November 2014, Ovarian Cancer Australia launched their national ovarian cancer research strategy. Paula Benson, Chair of the Board of Ovarian Cancer Australia, describes the strategy as a blueprint for how Australia...
can best contribute to the global ovarian cancer research effort.' I encourage all sides of politics to work together to support those who are working to find a cure for ovarian cancer.

This motion starts the conversation amongst MPs regarding ovarian cancer. It is important that we keep this going. It is our duty to disseminate this knowledge to people in our electorates and to ensure that women are aware of the risk factors and symptoms of ovarian cancer. I would like to acknowledge the women's cancer support group based on the Central Coast which offers support with gynaecological cancers. The group works alongside the Central Coast Cancer Council and provides support services at their office at Erina.

In Australia, a woman dies from ovarian cancer every eight hours. Every eight hours the life of a mother, daughter or sister is extinguished to this ruthless disease. I hope for the day when we have available widely accessible detection tests and effective treatments for this disease. It is important that we get behind organisations such as the Ovarian Cancer Australia. This February, help by participating in an afternoon tea, by baking a cake, by having a cuppa or by hosting an afternoon tea or a summer tea party for a great cause. I commend this motion to the House.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (11:41): Last year, ovarian cancer claimed the life of a very good friend of mine, Betty Leahy. Bette was an extraordinary woman who provided financial counselling services at child and family services before she retired. She mentored me as a young social worker and as a friend when I worked there. You could not meet a kinder and more gentle woman than Bette. It was my great fortune to have had such a person come into my life just as I started my career.

Yet Betty carried a burden that would be beyond many of us. Before she succumbed to her own illness, cancer had tragically taken the lives of both her husband and her daughter, who died in her 30s. Shortly before she died, Bette asked me to come and see her in St John of God Ballarat Hospital. She particularly wanted to ask me to use my position as Labor shadow health spokesperson and to use the position that all of us hold here in this place to champion the cause for more research into ovarian cancer and to raise awareness of the disease which so cruelly cut her life short, as well as that of so many other Australian women. As Labor's health spokesperson, I particularly want to elevate this cause. Though I particularly do want to acknowledge Betty, this is not just for Betty but also for all Australian women who are stricken by ovarian cancer every year. I am very grateful to the member for Shortland for providing this opportunity to do so.

February, as this motion recognises, is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Ovarian cancer has not, it is fair to say, achieved the same level of public recognition as other cancers, such as the magnificent work that has been done in recent years to raise awareness of breast cancer. Yet ovarian cancer is an insidious disease which still claims the lives of more half of the woman who contract it. It is the second most commonly diagnosed women's cancer in Australia, with around 1,400 new cases each year. That number is rising with around 1,000 women dying from the disease every year. It accounts for around five per cent of all cancer deaths in Australia. While, like most cancers, there have been great improvements in the mortality rate in recent years, the five-year survival rate, as we have heard, is still less than 45 per cent.

The average age of ovarian cancer diagnosis is around 64, which is the age at which former Senator Jeannie Ferris was first diagnosed before she, sadly, succumbed two years later. But it
can also affect much younger women. Perhaps most notable in this country is the case of one of our great athletes, Raelene Boyle, who was in her 40s when she was diagnosed with both breast cancer and then a few years later with ovarian cancer. Raelene is proof of how early detection is crucial to surviving ovarian cancer and why, therefore, we must do much more to raise awareness of the symptoms, which could be the difference between life and death. The Commonwealth Games medallist and three-time Olympic silver medallist was only diagnosed when an injury revealed an early stage, 12-centimetre mass on her ovary, which was then removed. The check-up 16 months later revealed the mass had grown again, and that was removed again.

Most women do not find out that they have ovarian cancer until the disease is at its advanced stages. By then it is too late for most, with a much lower survival rate. For the few who are diagnosed early, such as Raelene, the chances of beating ovarian cancer are, of course, much greater. As Raelene later said, the symptoms are so minor—having a distended tummy, a sore back or bleeding—that women generally just put up with these things. But if you think there might be something wrong, if you are not sure, go and get it checked out. The symptoms, we know, are hard to spot, but early detection is vital to survival. It is crucial that we do more to raise awareness of this disease so that these warning signs of ovarian cancer become as well known as the Pap smear or the breast check.

This motion recognises, in particular, that we need to highlight those symptoms. Through Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month and the many Morning Teals—the member the Canberra will, I think, be hosting one in this place again, or there will be events happening here—we must raise awareness of those symptoms: abdominal or pelvic pain, increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating, the need to urinate often or urgently, and difficulty eating or feeling full quickly. It is also very important to raise the importance of research, to raise funds for research, to ensure that the strategic research plan that the ovarian cancer association has developed is actually enacted in full, and that we have bipartisan support to make sure that that research funding does flow to ovarian cancer.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:46): I rise to speak in support of this motion by the member for Shortland and I thank her for bringing it to the House today. Cancer in all its types exacts a terrible price in Australia—emotionally, physically and financially. According to the Cancer Council, by the age of 85 one in two men and one in three women will have been diagnosed with some form of cancer. Some 128,000 new cancer cases are diagnosed each year. That is 14 cases an hour—and that number is rising. Thankfully, in Australia 66 per cent of people diagnosed with cancer are still alive after five years. According to doctors and the Cancer Council, the key is early diagnosis and treatment.

That is what makes being aware of the symptoms of ovarian cancer so important. Unfortunately, the symptoms are so commonplace that many women simply ignore them until it is too late. With no effective screening methods available and the symptoms being so commonplace, ovarian cancer is hard to detect early, which is why it often presents after it has spread. That is why it is so important that women are aware not only of those symptoms but of the other risk factors in developing ovarian cancer. Some of those risk factors include, as my colleagues have said before, being over 50 years of age, family history, changes in the genes BRCA1 or BRCA2, childlessness, infertility, having your first child after the age of 30,
never taking oral contraceptives, and using oestrogen-only hormone replacement therapy or fertility treatment.

If you have symptoms and these other risk factors, it is vital you get to your doctor for a check-up, as the survival rate of this cancer depends on whether or not it has spread from the ovaries. If it is contained within the ovaries, the survival rate is 93 per cent after five years, but that drops to 30 per cent if it has spread. That drop in survival rate is why I particularly support point 6 of this motion. We must do more to educate women to be more aware of the symptoms and risk factors.

We must help researchers to develop more efficient and effective diagnostics tools. Of course, that means making more funding available. To do that, I ask the opposition to support its own proposed budget measures that are before the Senate. As both the head of Treasury and the Governor of the Reserve Bank told cabinet last week, a return to surplus will not occur in the foreseeable future if we do not address the $110 million a week this government needs to borrow to pay the interest on Labor’s legacy of debt. I am certain that researchers in the field of ovarian cancer would enjoy just one week of the government’s interest payments for their research funds.

This is the reality of the vandalism wreaked on our economy by Labor. Labor’s debt is quite literally preventing more research funding. According to the Cancer Council, the direct cost of cancer is $3.8 billion in direct healthcare costs alone. This does not include time lost for treatment and recovery; nor can an adequate figure be placed on the suffering of victims and their families. To support women with gynaecological cancers requiring care, the government provides more than $1.5 million of funding each year through Cancer Australia for the Maintaining support for women with gynaecological cancers program. The program aims to support health professionals to deliver evidence based multidisciplinary care to women affected by gynaecological cancers and to provide information support for women, their families and carers.

As Minister Cash says, given how much we still need to understand about ovarian cancer, I hope that all Australians can come together during Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month and support women battling to overcome this disease. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (11:51): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, and I thank and commend the member for Shortland for her motion and her continued work in this area over a number of years. As we all know, February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. It is a time to promote awareness of the disease, and to encourage Australians to raise funds for vital research.

We do not know what causes Ovarian Cancer, and sadly there is currently no reliable early detection test or screening program. The Pap smear does not detect ovarian cancer. I know from the many speeches I have made on this issue, over the years since I have been an ambassador, that this is a common misconception. There are a lot of women out there who think that the Pap smear picks up ovarian cancer. The message to them is: it does not. I know that they come away quite stunned by the fact that the Pap smear is not designed to detect ovarian cancer.
We all know what the Pap smear is designed to detect, but ovarian cancer is not it. So they come away and are usually quite surprised. They think that they have got everything covered. They go and get their Pap smear done; they have got everything covered. Unfortunately, because there is no early detection mechanism for ovarian cancer, it is not.

Each year, more than 1,400 Australian women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer and around 100 will die from the disease. On average, three Australian women are diagnosed every day, and one Australian woman dies every eight hours. These are shocking statistics, and that is why this month I will be campaigning in my electorate, talking to women about the symptoms, raising awareness, and, importantly, raising funds. And also, again, I will be addressing that misconception about the Pap smear.

A major part of the problem with ovarian cancer is the late stage at which the cancer is detected and most women are diagnosed. The prognosis for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer is generally poor due to the advanced stage of the cancer. In fact, more than half these women will not live for five years after their diagnosis. But, if ovarian cancer is found in the early stages, up to 95 per cent of women will be alive and well after five years.

Ovarian cancer often goes unchecked, because the symptoms are ones that many women will face from time to time—they are quite common—and they are often symptoms of less serious and more common health problems. The key to early diagnosis is to know the symptoms and see your doctor if they arise. Almost all women diagnosed report four symptoms. A number of the speakers who have been speaking on this motion today have highlighted these, but we have to etch them in our minds. We women, we friends of women, we sisters of women—we need to etch these in our brains. They are: abdominal or pelvic pain; increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating; needing to urinate often or urgently; and feeling full after eating a small amount. This February, I ask everyone to learn these symptoms and make sure your wives, your mothers, your sisters, your daughters and friends know these symptoms too.

During my time as the ACT Ovarian Cancer Australia ambassador, I have met so many brave Canberrans who have lost a loved one to ovarian cancer, and who, in the face of their grief, dedicate themselves to raising funds for ovarian cancer research and raising awareness of this disease. In 2013 I helped launch the Capital Cookbook II, a tribute from a son to a mother whose life was cut short by ovarian cancer, and I again publicly congratulate the book’s writer, Stefan, on this magnificent achievement. He is still out there selling these books. You still see him down at the Kingston market once a month on a Sunday. He is an extraordinary young man, a very talented Canberra, and this is such a significant and moving tribute to his mother.

To the many others in the community who have been affected by ovarian cancer: you are not alone in your fight, as is evident here in the chamber today. We will stand together on all sides of politics and support you. Ovarian Cancer Australia relies on the generous support of the community to help fund research programs and support services for women diagnosed, as well as their families. I ask everyone to get behind Teal Ribbon Day, the primary fundraising and awareness day for Ovarian Cancer Australia, which is coming up on 25 February. Let’s get women talking about ovarian cancer and its symptoms, and let’s get out there in the community to raise funds and raise awareness.
Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (11:56): I would like to thank the member for Shortland for putting this issue before the chamber. As we all know, ovarian cancer is one of the major cancers that we face in our society. Many years ago in my state a federal senator, Senator Jeannie Ferris, lost a battle to ovarian cancer. I only met Jeannie a number of times, but she was a fine and decent woman. She, like many others, lost the battle too early to ovarian cancer.

We know this is a horrible cancer and one which we need research to look into further. The diagnosis, as we have heard, is generally through ultrasound. As ultrasound is not a common procedure in everyday life, diagnosis is often only realised by chance when doctors are looking for something else. As a consequence, it is often made very late, and we have heard from colleagues from both sides of the House to this effect. It can hit at any age too, and there have been some remarkable improvements in the ability of sufferers to conceive children. Previously, when young women faced this cancer, there was no opportunity for them to have children as the treatment would leave them infertile. Now there is an increased chance of younger women being able to have children should they wish to. Thanks to the improvements in IVF, this is now possible. Like all other cancers, we need to look into survival rates and ways to improve them. We have made great strides in this respect, but there is a lot of work to do and more can be done.

Prior to entering parliament, I decided that I wanted to raise money for certain causes and charities, and now I am looking at how I can help the cancer community throughout Australia, but naturally my focus is in South Australia. Together with my wife, we raised money for children with cancer in a charity bike ride in the Clare Valley in South Australia. Only a few weeks ago I participated in the Bupa Challenge Tour, as part of this year's Tour Down Under, where thousands of riders rode together, a number supporting cancer under the Ride for a Reason concept. Some riders raised around $10,000. My amount was not so high, but I want to put on the public record my thanks to the family and friends who gave generous financial support. Next Saturday another cancer event, this time for breast cancer, will be held at my local surf club at West Beach in Adelaide. In its first year there were around 80 swimmers. In the second year there were 400, including the state Liberal leader, Steven Marshall, and there was $10,000 raised last year, which was donated to the National Breast Cancer Foundation. We look forward to many more fine donations and swimmers like me getting out there next Saturday.

I want to touch on some general statistics for cancer in South Australia. Every day, 25 South Australians are diagnosed with cancer. Cancer is currently, as we know, the leading cause of death in Australia. One in two Australians will develop cancer, and one in five will have died of cancer by the age of 85. There is hope, however. We know that survival rates have increased by 19 per cent in the last two decades, and we know how to prevent or detect early up to 50 per cent of cancers. Regrettably, though, with the risk of cancer increasing, successful treatment is needed, as is early detection.

There is an important project that the Cancer Council in South Australia is undertaking and that I am keen to support. It is a bold new project that is looking at increasing the accommodation for cancer sufferers, building a purpose built cancer centre, the first of its kind, a facility providing accommodation services, research and prevention activities.
I want to briefly touch on the successes Australia has had in medical research, because I think this is part of the overall debate. Whether it be the Gardasil cervical cancer vaccine or the creation of the spray-on skin by Dr Fiona Wood or the development of the first penicillin based antibiotic by Howard Florey, there are important developments and successes we have had in medical research.

Going back to the Cancer Council operations in the western suburbs, pre-treatment chemotherapy, post-treatment care, management of treatment reviews and ongoing coordination of treatment services by nurse coordinators are all planned for this facility. One hundred and eighty rooms are planned for country South Australians, who can travel to the city for treatment, including family suites and culturally appropriate facilities. In closing, we know that greater research is required for ovarian cancer and that diagnosis has to be early to ensure better rates of survival. I support the motion.

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (12:00): I join with members on both sides of the House in congratulating and thanking the member for Shortland for moving this motion with respect to ovarian cancer. This is an insidious issue which confronts many women and which needs greater awareness publicly. There is no doubt that, when we talk about many health issues, often they are raised in the context of men—men are hopeless at understanding the nature of problems that they have; they are unlikely to go to a doctor; they do not understand symptoms. In those circumstances, often by the time they find themselves diagnosed, the condition that they have, and it often is a cancer, is much further down the track and therefore much harder to deal with and, hopefully, cure.

In this case, we are dealing with a situation that relates to women's health. Ovarian cancer has a series of symptoms which are common but which need to be better understood. However, in that context, it does not have an early detection mechanism which allows it to be found at early stages. That creates the real tragedy of ovarian cancer, which is that many women do not know they have it and, by the time they are diagnosed, it is so far down the track that it has moved elsewhere within the body and the likelihood of successful treatment and a longer and productive life is greatly reduced. In Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, we really need to get out there and ensure that women understand the nature of this disease and the symptoms of this disease so that more women can be diagnosed earlier and therefore, hopefully, receive the treatment that they need.

Also, going on from that, when we look at the detection mechanisms that are in place, such as mammograms for breast cancer or Pap smears for cervical cancer, there is a need for more ongoing research into ovarian cancer to ensure that we understand this condition better and, through that process, establish mechanisms which can be used for early detection. That requires a commitment to research. There is some good research going on, but it needs to be supported and it needs to be funded to ensure that this condition receives the analysis and research that it deserves.

Ovarian cancer is the growth of malignant cells in one or both ovaries and is often accompanied by the spread of malignant cells to surrounding organs in the abdominal cavity. Whilst a small number of cases appear to have an underlying genetic component, in most cases the causes of ovarian cancer are unknown. Ovarian cancer, although it does occur in younger women, is more common in women over the age of 50. Around 15 per cent of ovarian cancer cases in Australia are hereditary. It has the lowest survival rate of any women's
cancer. Its five-year survival rate is well below the average for all cancers. As has been mentioned by other speakers, each year more than 1,400 Australian women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer and approximately 1,000 women die from the disease. That overall five-year survival rate that I mentioned occurs in only around 43 per cent of cases, and that compares with a breast cancer survival rate of something like 89 per cent.

Ensuring that people are aware of the circumstances around it and its symptoms is very important. The symptoms are: abdominal or pelvic pain; increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating; the need to urinate urgently or often; and feeling full after eating only a small amount. It is incredibly important that women are aware of these symptoms and understand what they might mean, because only then will they actually be able to get the testing they need to establish whether or not they have this condition. The fact is—and we know it to be the case—with this condition particularly, as with many cancers, the earlier you get to it, the greater the chance of survival. The earlier you get to it, the greater the chance of a long and productive life.

With those few words, I urge everyone to get behind Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month to ensure that Australian women better understand this condition and the impact that it may have on their families and their lives.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (12:06): I rise today in support of the Member for Shortland's motion, and I endorse her comments and the comments made by those members present who have spoken on this very important issue. Ovarian cancer, as we know, takes away over 1,000 daughters, mothers, sisters and friends from their loved ones in Australia each year. It takes away one woman every eight hours. By the end of this week, 28 women will have been diagnosed with ovarian cancer and, unfortunately, 21 will have died. It is a truly devastating disease.

Sometimes, though, when we hear these figures, it does not bring home the personal impact. Today I want to talk about a friend of mine, her mother and her journey. The mother of this good friend of mine was recently diagnosed with stage 3 ovarian cancer. She is an amazing woman, a much loved wife, mother and grandmother, a good friend to so many, and an amazing volunteer in our local community. Currently, she is on this very traumatic journey. She is receiving excellent treatment and excellent care. But it is her fortitude, her resilience and her zest for life that is an inspiration to all she comes in contact with. Every single one of those statistics is a personal story. That is why it is so important that we discuss ovarian cancer in this place today.

As an ambassador for Ovarian Cancer Australia for over three years, I have spoken many times about how important it is to be familiar with the symptoms of ovarian cancer. I am going to run through them again, because you can never, ever talk about these symptoms enough. There are four key symptoms: abdominal or pelvic pain; increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating; needing to urinate often or urgently; and, finally, difficulty eating or feeling full quickly. The problem, of course, is that these symptoms are very common, and most women do not always recognise that these symptoms can be linked with ovarian cancer. It is critical that, if women experience these symptoms over time and if these symptoms are new to them and persist for more than two weeks, they should consult their doctor and do so as quickly as possible.
We all know that there is a lot of publicity given to other diseases and other cancers. Ovarian cancer is a uniquely women’s cancer. Despite the fact that it is the seventh most common cancer in women worldwide, it often gets overlooked. This has prompted Ovarian Cancer Australia to launch a national action plan for ovarian cancer research, an Australian-first agenda that sets out immediate priorities for research in order to make a significant change to the number of women dying from the disease each year. It is a very important plan. For the first time, a national plan has been developed for ovarian cancer enabling a priority-driven focus for investment, unifying effort and providing a blueprint for researchers and funders from around Australia.

As part of the launch of the national action plan, Ovarian Cancer Australia also announced $1 million in funding to support the priorities identified in the plan, which includes $900,000 for a funding partnership between Ovarian Cancer Australia and the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the researchers around the country who are dedicating their time to this critically important research, particularly those amazing researchers at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne.

Ovarian Cancer Australia are also again promoting Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month this February, with teal ribbons being sold and Morning Teal events being held around the country. To help raise awareness in my local community I am hosting a Morning Teal on 27 February and I would encourage those across the country to do the same or to wear a teal ribbon to indicate their support. Last year, our morning tea raised over $10,000 for Ovarian Cancer Australia. This money goes to supporting women and their families on their journey, as well as the important research project that will help us find a cure for ovarian cancer. This is a very critical issue facing our community. Ovarian cancer currently has a five-year survival rate of 43 per cent. We want to make a difference to that survival rate. It is through advocacy, it is through research and it is through all of us knowing the symptoms that we will be able to make a change to that.

Debate adjourned.

**Great Barrier Reef Marine Park**

**Debate resumed on the motion:**

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;

(d) that future generations are able to continue to use and enjoy the Marine Park;

(e) the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage values are protected; and
(f) the ecologically sustainable use of marine resources by traditional owners consistent with their traditional practices, are provided for;

(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 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) calls on the:
   (a) Australian Labor Party and the Greens to pass the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 which will enable a tripling of penalties for those poaching turtles and/or dugongs; and
   (b) relevant parties to work, as a priority, with traditional owners to progressively increase the protections afforded to threatened species, such as turtle and dugong, through traditional use marine resource agreements and other appropriate means, seeking to:
      (i) where traditional rights under the Native Title Act 1993 apply, seek agreement with traditional owners to prohibit the capture and killing of any species from designated Green Zones within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park area;
      (ii) continue to allow certain activities to take place with a permit, such as research and management programs for fauna and flora where they pose a threat to humans or the environment, as per existing regulations; and
      (iii) introduce legislation to prohibit the taking of marine species, including seabirds, in designated Green Zones within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Area, where other efforts have proven to be inadequate;

(7) in the interest of supporting the policing of turtle and dugong product that is transported for commercial purposes, prohibit the movement of native species, taken under the Native Title Act 1993 outside the area in which it is caught; and

(8) recognises that these initiatives 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.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (12:11): I am delighted to speak to this motion from the member for Leichhardt. The member for Leichhardt and I have been on a journey together to protect the dugongs and turtles of the Great Barrier Reef. We have been
inspired by the work of people such as Colin Riddell and Rupert Imhoff, and there are many others within the traditional community with whom I have spoken who have taken strong and courageous steps. They have been very impressive. The Turtle and Dugong Task Force, led by Larissa Hale, has been an exemplar in taking steps forward. The Indigenous Advisory Committee, led by Melissa George, has been an exemplar in taking steps forward for protecting dugongs and turtles within the reef area.

Let me begin with a statement of what we are doing on the dugong and turtle front, and then turn to the broader issues with regard to the Great Barrier Reef. In relation to dugongs and turtles: we have a $5 million Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan, something which fills a gap which we inherited. That includes $2 million for an Australian Crime Commission investigation into poaching that is underway. It brings the full force of the law with an investigation at the highest level. Secondly, there is $2 million for specialised Indigenous ranger programs for turtle and dugong protection. This is not just training rangers directly. It is training the trainers as well, so as to expand the number of capable, qualified Indigenous rangers who are committed to action and who are then going to be backed with the support of the law, of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and of the Queensland government in fearlessly seeking out those who misuse the good name of traditional owners. Many traditional owners have come to me and said that they have been horrified that poaching has been done in their name. They are supportive. They are strong. They are clear that this poaching and transportation of meat is completely unacceptable.

We have also provided $300,000 for expanding the role of the Cairns and Fitzroy Turtle Rehabilitation Centre. This money has been provided. And in relation to marine debris clean-up, there is a total of $700,000. We are currently working with the community, but what I want to see most of all is money allocated to ensure that where there are ghost nets and marine debris that there is physical work in the ocean to protect our dugongs and our turtles from these swirling nets of death.

More than that, we have legislation before the Senate to triple the penalties for the taking of dugongs and turtles illegally—for that poaching.

I say thank you to the Greens, who have been supportive of this, and I would urge the ALP not to filibuster but to work with us to ensure that these measures are passed. We have seen them filibuster in the past, which was simply extraordinary. I can only say that that must have been a disconnect between the senior leadership and the Senators on the floor.

I now turn to the reef more broadly. We have done things which no other government has ever done. We have worked with the previous Queensland government—hopefully still current Queensland government, but events on the ground will determine that. They have put forward a proposal for the Abbot Point spoil—which was going into the water under the previous state and federal Labor government—to go on land. We have ended the fact—

*Mr Albanese interjecting—*

**Mr HUNT:** No, it is a fact. You attended. The member for Grayndler attended Abbot Point and said that it was one of the prime industrial sites in Australia. I have that quote and I am happy to table it.

*Mr Albanese interjecting—*

**Mr HUNT:** That was your plan, my friend.
Mr Albanese: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My point of order is that he should withdraw. I never, ever supported it. He cannot point to any comment supporting dredge spoil—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): Member for Grayndler, I heard you use an unparliamentary phrase that I could ask you to withdraw. Please sit down. There is no point of order. Please resume your seat, Member for Grayndler.

Mr HUNT: Very clearly, we have ended the five projects which we inherited which would have had large-scale dredge disposal in the marine park and we are moving legal force, regulation, to ban dredge disposal in the marine park forever. (Time expired)

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (12:16): The Great Barrier Reef is not just an environmental asset; it is important to our economy as a tourism asset as well. It is already worth some $5.7 billion to the Australian economy, resulting in the direct employment of some 65,000 people, including many Indigenous Australians. There are 1.6 million visitors per year, and it is a key drawcard for our major markets in China, India and Malaysia. Tourism is the ultimate sustainable industry and has been nominated by Deloitte as a key driver of jobs and prosperity over the next 20 years.

Voters in the Queensland election sent a very clear message up and down the coast to save the Great Barrier Reef. The LNP know the price of everything and the value of nothing. Queensland Labor listened and committed important funding—$100 million for the reef package to improve water quality and $40 million for a tourism plan to lift demand and create jobs. Campbell Newman just had a plan to reannounce infrastructure funding for tourism roads. There was no reef plan for the future.

The member for Leichhardt's motion is important but it cannot stand alone. Climate change is of course amongst the biggest threats to the Great Barrier Reef, and we must address this in conjunction with other measures, which has been made very clear. The government's position is very clear. President Obama spoke in Queensland and said on 15 November last year:

The incredible natural glory of the Great Barrier Reef is threatened … I want to come back and I want my daughters to be able to come back and I want them to be able to bring their daughters or sons to visit. And I want that there 50 years from now.

Did the current federal government acknowledge that praise for the pristine Great Barrier Reef? No. They condemned President Obama's statements as an attack on our national sovereignty—showing how backward they are. This reaction from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the trade minister shows that they simply just do not get it. It does not matter who is in charge of the LNP; only Labor is committed to a strong environmental policy that recognises that our natural environment is not only important for the quality of our life but also a major driver of economic activity.

Of course, the current government have cut all domestic tourism funding. They argue that domestic tourism funding is the business just of state governments. That particularly hurts Queensland. They have of course cancelled Australia's membership of the United Nations World Tourism Organization—a minimal fee for involvement on the global stage. Once again we saw the isolationism that led those opposite to oppose the ratification of the Kyoto protocol and the engagement in those international forums for so long.
Only Labor governments will protect the reef. We will take real action on climate change, not the absurd response that we have seen from those opposite, who either support the policy that Malcolm Turnbull denigrated so effectively or, as Malcolm Turnbull himself has done, backflip on their own views in order to try and win votes for the ongoing leadership battle that is occurring in those opposite.

As tourism shadow minister, I, with Mark Butler, announced—in November last year that Labor would put a ban on dredge spoil dumping in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and that we would continue our work investing in the reef. The former federal Labor government invested $200 million in Reef Rescue—cut by those opposite. That, together with Queensland Labor’s commitment, was one of the reasons that the LNP were rejected so resoundingly in the Queensland election and why Australian voters are continuing to reject the Abbott government.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (12:21): There is no doubt that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is an icon for everyone, a tourist top-of-the-list visit for anyone, both Australian and from overseas, but I want to highlight the important issue of balancing economy, environment and the native title rights of Indigenous land and sea holders to hunt in those areas. That has always caused some confusion to Australians, who regard it as pre-eminent above all things that endangered species should be protected, but we have acknowledged the rights of native title holders in those areas to hunt, usually with a combination of traditional and non-traditional means.

My first interest in this area was in 2005, when I lobbied the then coalition environment minister that they should not be using contemporary and modern-day tools for these purposes and that, if they were truly hunting traditionally, it should be done with traditional tools. There are of course two sides to that debate because we have to look at the humanity and the compassion of using traditional tools, sometimes leading to the injuring of animals rather than a quick kill that is achieved with modern-day equipment. We also have the issue of being able to pursue animals using motorised vessels until they are exhausted, which is also a concern to many.

That is only a piece of subtext to the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, which increases the penalties for those who do not have those exemptions under the EPBC Act. Those are the people who are engaged in killing, poaching and transportation, often for trade or commercial purposes. No-one in Australia would support our most valued dugongs and turtles being subject to such a fate, so that bill is very simple. It is supported, I think, by everyone that the killing, injuring, taking, transporting, moving, poaching or keeping of any of these products of turtle or dugong should be not only prohibited but dealt with by tough penalties.

Of course, we have had the Queensland election, where the signal was also very, very clear from voters that, above all else, they want to take an absolutely precautionary principle approach to the Great Barrier Reef and take no chances. For any Queensland government, in balancing up port expansion, the economy and local jobs with an absolute, no-exceptions protection of the Great Barrier Reef, both the marine park area and the conservation region around it, we have to be making sure that we take no chances with dredging.

The first thing that I want to see is those limits to dredging and very careful disposal of what is dredged, because obviously, for larger and larger vessels to access our major ports,
there is going to be an element of that. We need to be constantly monitoring water quality and ensuring that those improvements are achieved, and I have no doubt that that is occurring. We need better strategic planning. With port development, we need to be looking for the least impact, the least footprint, the least ecological and hydrological impact on our local foreshores as possible, and of course we need to be reinvesting some of the proceeds of a strong economy into protecting the reef.

That all makes common sense. That is part of both the coalition and the state LNP's approach, and I want to see that that is not in any way imperilled if there is to be a change of government when government in Queensland is decided.

Where we go from here is quite simple. We respect the role of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to make independent assessments of how we are going on the Great Barrier Reef. Not only is it one of the greatest natural wonders of the world, it is also probably the best protected. No place on the planet has more environmental investment in keeping it in its pristine condition than the Great Barrier Reef. On any technical appraisal of the work that we have done here in Australia we can make a very strong case internationally that we are doing the right thing for our park and that its world heritage status should not be considered to be in danger.

We have got an outlook report and we have the state party report, which importantly was done independently, as I have said, by the marine park authority. Those contributions make a very strong case for us to be able to fend off a number of environmental groups that are working very hard to have that endangered status supported internationally. What we can do with these reports is show (a) that we are doing more than anywhere else in the world, (b) that we are investing more money than anywhere else in the world to look after this pristine asset, (c) that we are doing the monitoring that will give us the early warning if anything is going wrong, and (d) that we truly, unlike anywhere else in the world, can perfectly balance the needs of a local economy in job creation and the exploitation of our natural resources for the benefits of Australia together with protecting the Great Barrier Reef.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (12:25): I am very grateful to speak on this motion put forward by the member for Leichhardt. I note some of the contribution from the member for Bowman, who was able to rope in the election results from Queensland last Saturday, which is quite amazing because I can go back three years to the last state election, an election in the lead up to which former Premier Newman gave an assurance to the Australian Conservation Foundation that the environment had nothing to fear under an LNP government. That was publicised far and wide. Then on the Sunday, the day after the election where the Liberal National Party was swept into power with the biggest electoral majority in the history of the Westminster system, the very next day, the former Deputy Premier, Jeff Seeney, the member for Callide, said, 'By the way, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park needs to be smaller.' Fair dinkum, he said that the next day, the day after the election.

So the member for Bowman did get something right: the people of Queensland rejected his party's approach to the environment and their betrayal of the Great Barrier Reef. The protection of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is of concern not only to the people of Queensland, not only to the people of my electorate, but all across Australia and all across the globe because the reef has that international status because it is an international icon—the largest living organism—and as elected representatives we must work to protect this natural
asset. I say that not just because I am married to someone from Cairns and I do spend my holidays, when I can, not only up with her in-laws but also in one of the greatest places in the world: Cairns and the area abutting the Great Barrier Reef.

This current government, sadly, is intent on destroying these assets and has been a bit of an embarrassment on the world stage when it comes to responding to climate change and the impacts that will have on the Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef is known to divers throughout the world and to tourism operators as the largest coral reef in the world. It stretches from the tip of Cape York Peninsula, nudging Papua New Guinea, to just north of Fraser Island, covering some 347,000 square kilometres. As people know, Queensland is a lure for tourists from all around Australia and the world who want to see the Great Barrier Reef, and it is a great boon to our economy, obviously. It is great for the Queensland economy and great for the Australian economy. At least 65,000 Australians owe their livelihoods to the reef, and it generates around $6 billion in economic activity every year. It is not something that is dug out of the ground, never to be seen again. It is an environmental and economic resource that can generate income year after year if we look after it.

The science of marine sanctuaries is actually quite settled. They are critical to restoring the abundance and diversity of marine life and to preserving the health of our oceans. The Labor Party is committed to the sustainable management of Australia's marine resources and we are a strong, proud defender and manager of these oceans and those who use them.

This motion from the member for Leichhardt is very timely following the state election in Queensland, where a Liberal government had actually shown by its actions—not by its last-minute words but by its actions—that it was determined to destroy the reef through dredge spoiling. And what did the people of Queensland say? They said, 'See you later—sayonara.'

When it comes to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, those opposite and I have very different views on how to protect this World Heritage site for future generations. We can see some desperate lobbying from Minister Hunt, trying to conceal the true facts about how much in danger the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is. But the reality will come out and UNESCO will give a clear ruling on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and that will be a shameful legacy to hang around Prime Minister Abbott, the current Prime Minister. If we do not do what we can to protect the Great Barrier Reef for our future generations, our names will be blackened in the history books, and I do not want to be associated with that shameful legacy.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (12:31): I rise to speak in support of this motion by the member for Leichhardt, and I thank him for bringing it to the attention of the House. There is no disputing that the Great Barrier Reef is a natural wonder of the world and deserves the best possible protection. The reef brings two million tourists a year to Australia from all around the globe. It supports 69,000 jobs and generates $5.6 billion in revenue for Queensland and Australia. Anybody who suggests, therefore, that the government is not serious about protecting the reef is, quite frankly, delusional.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is managed using a zonal system. The whole of the park—all 344,400 square kilometres, an area larger than Victoria and Tasmania combined—is divided into one of seven zones from general use to preservation. The zoning of a particular area determines the type of activities permitted in that area. For example, trawl fishing is only allowed in the general use zone. I believe this is part of the perceived problem that the Greens have with the way the park is managed. The general use zone covers approximately 95 per
cent of the park, and the Greens and their alliance partners think that it should be less. The zones for the marine park were based on the application of systemic conservation techniques—science. Yet those opposite say that the science is wrong and that they know better. This is such an extraordinary irony: Labor and the Greens, of all people, who extol science when it suits them, rejecting it when it does not. The zones protect the most delicate areas of the reef from damage by commercial and recreational activities. They were selected for special protection by the science as the most vital parts of the reef. These areas are the breeding and spawning grounds, nursery areas and refuges for endangered species, all of which help to boost the number of species on the reef and the abundance of fish.

The Queensland LNP government has a proud history of protecting the reef. The LNP government immediately acted to cut the Bligh Labor government's plan to dump 38 million tonnes of dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park by 90 per cent and developed a better plan to dispose of dredge material on land. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has publicly recognised the significant work and progress made by the Queensland government in managing and protecting the Great Barrier Reef. The Newman LNP government introduced the toughest laws ever to protect the Great Barrier Reef, increasing penalties for serious environmental harm to the reef to over $3.5 million in fines or five years in jail.

What did Labor do? Labor had a chance to support these laws but voted against them. The Queensland LNP's reef protection package provided more than $155 million for practical reef initiatives, including new funding of $17.1 million for the Great Barrier Reef Foundation's eReefs project and increased vessel tracking to protect our reef. What we have in those opposite are Great Barrier Reef deniers—those who fail to accept the science and think they know better. They fail to look at the dreadful record of their own party and cannot recognise the good management when it is presented to them. Their status as Great Barrier Reef deniers is settled, because they have delayed the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, which would triple the penalties for those people poaching turtles and dugongs on the reef. As usual, they offer no actual solution; they just sit back and criticise everyone else. While those opposite harp and complain, they are proving themselves yet again to be the problem and not the solution. They are continuing to block the budget measures even on their own savings bill, and they refuse to pass the environment legislation so they can continue to blame others.

The Labor opposition's record of stewardship of the reef is a disgrace. How is it that the reef has deteriorated when Labor were in government in Queensland for the vast majority of the last 23 years if they are such good stewards? The simple answer is that they were not and they neglected the reef. It is time for them to get out of the way of those who want to take positive, direct action. I thank the member for Leichhardt for his motion and I commend the motion to the House.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (12:35): The Great Barrier Reef is the largest coral reef ecosystem in the world. It is one of the world's most unique and biologically diverse ecosystems, of which Australia is the international custodian. As an environmental asset it is priceless. Yet regrettably, like so many other environmental assets around the world, its preservation is being jeopardised because of the influence of big business and because of short-term economic gains all too often driving government policies.
In 1975 the reef was declared a marine park, and in 1981 the reef was placed on the World Heritage List, in recognition of its unique status and the serious risks it faced. Since then, even with all of the protective actions taken, the health of the reef continues to deteriorate. The combined effects of human activity and climate change are taking their toll. Yet the Abbott government and the ousted Queensland Newman government remain in denial, pretending that all is well, boasting about their commitments to the reef and how they are protecting it, and yet fiercely opposing the UNESCO listing of the reef as being 'in danger'. Indeed, the Abbott government is furiously lobbying to ensure that the 'in danger' listing is not applied to the Great Barrier Reef by UNESCO, because the Abbott government does not want any additional barriers placed in the way of proponents of large-scale developments in the reef area. On 30 January 2015, Environment Minister Greg Hunt wrote to Kishore Rao, Director of the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO, stating:

… Australia firmly believes that the property does not warrant inclusion on the list of World Heritage properties in danger.

Minister Hunt may speak for the Australian government, but he does not speak for all Australians, many of whom simply do not agree with him, nor are his conclusions supported by many environmental experts. The minister draws on a report prepared for him jointly by his own environment department and by the Australian and Queensland government agencies prior to the recent Queensland state election. My view is that the Newman government's woeful environmental track record significantly contributed to the demise of the Newman government in the recent Queensland elections. Quite simply, if the reef were not in danger, there would not be any need to spend a purported $2 billion over the next decade to protect it, as Minister Hunt claims that his government will be doing. Even the government's own assessment shows that the reef is in danger. The state party report says:

… the property continued to face a number of significant pressures. It concluded that the overall outlook for the Reef is poor, has worsened since 2009, and is expected to further deteriorate in the future; and that greater reductions of all threats at all levels—Reef-wide, regional and local—are required to prevent the projected declines in the Reef and to improve its capacity to recover.

Simultaneously, we see the Abbott government supporting further industrialisation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park coastline, which, even with all the pretentious safeguards, can only add to the risk and possibly the ultimate demise of the reef. Warming ocean waters and ocean acidification, combined with cyclones and hurricanes, are compounding the risk to what is already a very fragile ecosystem. Adding more shipping, dredging and ports to the area, even with the best-laid-out management plans, can only be bad for this unique environmental asset.

My understanding is that currently over 4,000 bulk carriers pass through the Great Barrier Reef each year and under future plans the number could increase to 7,000 ships per year. More ships mean increased risks because, regrettably, shipping accidents do occur—not to mention water disturbance that obviously occurs. The risks become even greater as larger ships are used.

The motion is nothing but an attempt by the member for Leichhardt to portray the Abbott and former Queensland LNP governments of being proactive in protecting the Reef when, simultaneously, those governments are allowing the greatest risk to the Great Barrier Reef to become worse. Interestingly, the motion makes no mention of the in danger listing nor the
Abbott government's attempts to block the listing. Right now what the Australian people see as the pressing issue—and they will not be fooled or sidetracked by other matters—is ensuring that the Reef is listed as in danger as is proposed. I understand that later on this year UNESCO will be considering the in danger listing.

The Great Barrier Reef, as other speakers have pointed out, covers 348,000 square kilometres—(Time expired)

Debate adjourned.

Reclink National Program Funding

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (12:41): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:
(a) that the Reclink National Program (RNP) has delivered over 100,000 participation opportunities to thousands of people experiencing disadvantage across Australia, in partnership with over 450 community organisations;
(b) that there is no other organisation in Australia with the expertise, capacity and capability of effectively and efficiently providing over 100,000 participation opportunities every year to the most disenfranchised, disadvantaged and forgotten Australians; and
(c) widespread community concern at the diminishing resources to support people experiencing disadvantage, many of whom have relied upon the RNP for social participation and social inclusion through engagement with sport and recreation programs; and

(2) calls on the Government to reinstate funding to the RNP.

Reclink was founded in St Kilda in my electorate of Melbourne Ports in 1990. It is a not-for-profit organisation that enhances the lives of disadvantaged people by providing them with sports and arts programs. Peter Cullen, the imaginative and passionate life force of Reclink, explained its origins when he was an outreach worker in the late 1980s on the streets of St Kilda:

… you saw people living in a lost world, where there seemed no clear pathways to opportunity … I thought a form of crisis intervention may have been missed … The street people needed another way of being supported or reached … What could act as a circuit breaker?

Typically, Reclink program participants suffer from social isolation, drug addiction, mental health issues, problems with the law, homelessness and even sexual abuse. One of the things we must not forget in Australia is that sometimes there are people who cannot work. Reclink gives people dignity, as an example sent to me by Peter shows. It is pleasing to see Peter Cullen and John Ballis, Reclink's CEO, here in this Federation Chamber today:

One man was twenty-one when I met him and living in special accommodation. The man was wandering around the streets of St Kilda, and he had severe schizophrenia, and as such found finding employment a challenge—nevertheless, he had a life to live. At this time, he would never have become involved with a mainstream sporting club …

I can imagine this scene on the Peanut Farm Oval in St Kilda. At quarter time, this bloke came up to Peter and said:

"Peter, I got three kicks!"

Reclink became vital to this man's life and provides him with some experience of normality in his life. As Peter Cullen's letter said:
This model has brought welfare agencies to successfully work together …

It is the ultimate silence breaker with proven capacity to synthesise existing programs and sporting leagues.

Without this model of inclusivity, there would never have been a football league at Yulura, near Uluru. After a call from an indigenous leader, Reclink Australia was able to bring together resources to bring the league into existence. The 2012 league's grand final won Community Event of the Year. Around that time, a social worker was amazed to pass a local roadhouse usually filled with a big group of drinkers. It was empty. She then passed a football ground which was full of the same usual drinkers training for football.

Reclink is an organisation that I have always supported and which was seen by the previous government as having national applicability. Julia Gillard, Kate Lundy and Kate Ellis thought, as I do, that what worked on the streets of St Kilda could work in Adelaide, Brisbane and anywhere around Australia. Forty-seven per cent of participants of the pilot Reclink Work for the Dole program in Queensland were able to return to work—a much higher return-to-work rate than was achieved in other programs. Because of its success, MAX Employment has made the Reclink Work for the Dole program its flagship program and other employment providers have requested Reclink's help in partnering with them. Reclink's whole raison d'etre is that sport and other inclusive activities help people directly involved with Reclink by giving them services that prevent them having to access mental health facilities or, indeed, return to prison.

Budget cuts have hit Reclink hard. Reclink now has over 150 types of recreational opportunities across Australia but in the period preceding the funding cuts it had over 500 member agencies. Reclink Australia provides enormous support to many government funded organisations, particularly supporting their workers.

Last week the Senate Select Committee on the Abbott Government's Budget Cuts released its first interim reports. Amongst nine recommendations the committee recommended—I will use the words from the report—that the government 'immediately reinstate Commonwealth funding for Reclink'. As the French say, 'exactement'—exactly. I think the lessons of the last few weeks are that the current government's destruction of programs like this is precisely the reason they are in the political trouble they are in. It is cold and heartless to affect the people all around Australia who need this Reclink program the most.

Inclusivity in sport has created such a wonderful atmosphere for people who are challenged. I have seen it myself. I have seen its worth. I remember, as a new member of parliament, standing with Peter around the Botanical Gardens sporting Tan as we gave medals to people who had never participated in competitive sport in their lives—all from our electorates and all improving their lives by participating in some healthy, physical activity. Congratulations to Reclink; more strength to their arm.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke):** Is the motion seconded?

*An honourable member interjecting—*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The motion is seconded.

**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (12:46): I rise to support the motion by shadow parliamentary secretary the member for Melbourne Ports, because Reclink has been doing incredibly valuable work across the country for 25 years. And that work is under threat due to
these funding cuts. I have been aware of the work of Reclink for many years because Peter Cullen, who is with us today, the founder of this wonderful organisation, is a Werribee person—a person whose work I have admired for decades. He is a great Australian who has a compelling sense of community, of fairness and of service.

He saw need. He saw desolation in people’s lives, and he took action to reverse it. His work, as mentioned by the member for Melbourne Ports, began in Melbourne in 1998 as street outreach work, using sport to connect and engage people. Peter established the model in Victoria and then, through his extensive lobbying, grew the service into a national one.

In 1990 the entity was formally founded as Reclink, and has grown exponentially since. In 1997 it set up work in New South Wales and South Australia and today has services across the country. It works with over 450 community organisations and provides over 100,000 participation opportunities, in sport and the arts across the country, to the most disenfranchised, disadvantaged and forgotten Australians. In 2013 it partnered with the Victorian government, and in 2007 it partnered with the federal government.

Reclink targets some of the community’s most vulnerable and isolated people—at-risk youth, those who experience mental illness, people with a disability, the homeless, people tackling alcohol and other drug issues and people facing social and economic hardship. As part of their unique hub-and-spoke network model, Reclink Australia has facilitated cooperative partnerships with a membership of over 450 community, government and private organisations.

I came face to face with the work of Reclink in the lead-up to the 2013 election. I visited a training session of the Wynbay Power footie team based in Werribee and saw the program in action. This football team supports vulnerable young people—people that I know. I found there young men—men whom I have known for several years—training and playing football. I had my own personal concerns for the lives of those young men after they left school. They came from backgrounds with very little support. To see them there in a group, collectively working with responsible adults and continuing to be connected to their community, was absolutely fantastic. And it reinforced for me how important organisations like Reclink are. I dread to think where those young lives would be without Peter and the work that he does. These former students were saddled with hardships no parent would wish upon their child, and through the services of Reclink they are still playing sport and are still connected.

The sporting options offered are huge, from the well-known football program to bike riding, blind soccer, bushwalking, sailing, surfing and tenpin bowling, to name just a few. The service also expanded from sporting activities to the arts, including the Choir of Hard Knocks—and who could forget the power of the Choir of Hard Knocks and how it has grown into small choirs across the country. There are training and education programs, work-ready programs, mentor programs and drug and alcohol programs.

Peter Cullen outlines the motivation behind Reclink in his own words:

In 1989 while doing street outreach work in St Kilda, I spoke to many people who indicated that their personal issues made access to sport and arts programs difficult. I could see that the impact of busy minds and bodies helped people to find meaning and direction in their lives. The lack of opportunities at that time was a challenge for these people, who often experienced trauma, boredom, loneliness, anger, depression, feelings of suicide and other personal and sometimes complex issues.
To me, it was important to establish an organisation that brought like minded agencies together as a
group, to provide these types of opportunities to their communities and clients and provide valuable
advocacy at the same time. Establishing Reclink provided the vehicle for this vision.

This is an organisation that has runs on the board. It is a not-for-profit that only seeks to
support our most vulnerable; it has incredible community support. I call on the government to
reinstate the funding to ensure Reclink can continue its work across our country.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (12:51): I am pleased to support this motion moved by the
member for Melbourne Ports in this parliament today. The great, late Nelson Mandela once
famously said:

Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in
a way that little else does … Sport can create hope where once there was only despair.

Last year, I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to participate in Reclink's Community
Cup in Sydney. This Reclink Community Cup event is, of course, a much larger event in
Melbourne. My team, the rock'n'roll based Western Walers, coached by Jason Evans and
skippered by Mark Evans, took on the media industry based Sydney Sailors, captained by
Adam Spencer, at Henson Park in my electorate of Grayndler. It was my Aussie Rules debut.
I took a mark, somewhat surprisingly, which features—for those doubters—on YouTube.
This was the highlight of my short Australian Rules career and, given that the KPI I had set
myself was simply to be able to walk off the field, I was pretty pleased. Yet for the third year
in a row my team, the Walers, lost.

The real winner of the day, however, was undoubtedly the community. The money we
raised went to Reclink, a Melbourne based charity that works in partnership with over 450
charities from around Australia. It is a charity that until the coalition's first budget in May last
year received funding from the Commonwealth government.

Reclink has a long and proud history of coordinating sporting and cultural programs for
those less fortunate. It provides a valuable link between vulnerable people and their
community in towns and cities across Australia. Reclink makes a difference for youth at risk,
those experiencing mental illness, people with a disability, the homeless, and people tackling
alcohol and other drug issues and social and economic hardship. In the year 2013 to 2014,
Reclink Australia delivered over 115,000 participation opportunities for sport, recreation and
arts. Reclink helps facilitates pathways for education and employment, often giving people a
confidence in themselves they previously struggled to find. Reclink believes there is sufficient
anecdotal evidence to suggest that, for every dollar invested by the federal government in the
Reclink National Program, there is at least a tenfold equivalent dollar benefit to the
community. That makes the federal government investment of $560,000 per annum value for
money in economic terms, as well as priceless in social terms. I would like to recognise the
hard work of the team behind Reclink Australia and congratulate founder Peter Cullen for all
that he has done to make communities around the nation a better place.

The Senate select committee into the Liberal government's budget cuts recommended that
the government reinstate Commonwealth funding for Reclink Australia immediately. Today,
the coalition should do just that. Brian Millett, a participant in the Reclink program, spoke to
the Senate select committee about his friends and the positive impact of Reclink in their lives.
He said:
Wednesday is football and they cannot wait for Wednesday. They belong there; they have a connection there. That is what I needed. I needed that gap filler to get me there.

It seems that the coalition know the price of everything and the value of nothing. You do not create stronger communities by tearing them apart.

I call upon the coalition to immediately reinstate funding to the Reclink national program and express some disappointment that there are no coalition speakers on this motion that has been moved by the member for Melbourne Ports and seconded by the member for Lalor in this House today. That is extraordinarily unusual. It is the case that people front and put their argument when debates occur in this parliament. To simply withdraw from the debate, to have nothing to say, does not do anything to give credit to the coalition government. However, all will be forgiven with the stroke of a pen if they fix up this funding shortfall and reinstate the cuts that they made in last year's unfair budget.

Debate adjourned.

Canned Hunting

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (12:56): I move:

That this House:

(1) condemns:

(a) 'canned hunting' where animals are raised in captivity for the purpose of being killed in the name of trophy kills; and

(b) the importation of any species (body or part) in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) appendixes I, II or III as a result of a canned hunt;

(2) congratulates the Australian Government for introducing new measures to tighten controls on the trade of rhinoceros to tackle illegal trade of this threatened species;

(3) welcomes Australian Government consideration of actions to improve the protection of African lions by preventing imports of lion trophies obtained through illegal hunting; and

(4) notes that:

(a) the CITES lays down guidelines on the importation of all trophy kills, and the Department of Environment uses this information as its guide in Australia;

(b) although CITES is legally binding on the parties, it does not take the place of national laws; and

(c) as a signatory to CITES, the Australian Government is committed to the protection of wildlife that may be adversely affected by trade.

I spoke in this place in May last year about the appalling practice of canned hunting and today I rise with the knowledge that my words back then are resonating increasingly in our community, in our parliament and around the world. People see this practice, as I do, as cruel and barbaric.

Firstly, I must pay special thanks to Minister Greg Hunt, whom I approached last year about this topic. The minister and his staff have been incredibly supportive and understanding of my deep concerns about canned hunting. I also must thank the Parliamentary Library for their fantastic research efforts, in particular Bill McCormack and Kate Baker. But let me first recap.
I had no idea of what canned hunting was until I met one of my constituents, Donalea Patman, the founder of For the Love of Wildlife. Donalea has been a fantastic ambassador for saving African lions. Donalea is extremely passionate about ridding the world of the sinister practice of canned hunting and has shown me numerous tragic videos of footage depicting extremely distressing scenes of African lions being killed, whether by bow and arrow or by firearm. I still recall the first video I saw which depicted a lion lazing back under a shady tree and a so-called hunter not far away who quickly pumped several bullets with a high-powered weapon into the lion. It was simply shocking. Sadly, the lion did not try to escape. It was obviously used to human contact and had no fear of the hunter.

Canned hunting can be best described as hunts where native or exotic animals have no fear of humans, are confined by fencing to guarantee the hunter a quick, cost-effective and efficient kill. The video I witnessed showed part of an industry that is flourishing under what I believe are false pretences. Volunteers are conned in the name of conservation and pay up to $800 a week for the privilege of handling orphan lion cubs back into the wild. Many of these so-called conservation reserves are actually breeding grounds for the canned hunting of lions where cubs a few days old are taken off their mothers and rented out to reserves that falsely claim they are orphans.

Allowing the lion to be killed in a canned hunt can fetch between $8,000 and $25,000. Soft as I was with the canned hunting of African lions, further research revealed that this practice is ongoing with endangered species around the planet. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora laid down the guidelines for importation of all animals, including trophy kills. The Australian Department of the Environment uses the information as a guide, Australia having been a party to the convention since 1976. I have researched the topic of canned hunting and where Australia sits with this unbelievably cruel practice. I had the great pleasure of meeting Ian Michler, an internationally respected conservationist with more than 15 years experience investigating canned hunting, when he visited Australia and met with me, the minister and other members from both sides of the parliament.

With canned hunting, the big issue of importation into Australia is that we simply cannot tell whether an animal has come into this country as part of a canned hunt or not. I firmly believe we should change the Australian Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 not only to stop imports of African lions obtained through canned hunts but to prevent all species obtained through canned hunting listed under the convention's appendices I, II and III from being imported, unless specifically approved by the Minister for the Environment. This would only be for non-commercial conservation, breeding, research and education purposes. I believe we have a moral obligation to do what is right. Indeed, it is also the right decision for our endangered world wildlife. We all have the duty to future generations to do this.

Many believe that hunting of endangered species has economic and conservation benefits for countries involved. This is simply false. A report written by Melbourne economist Roderick Campbell from Economists at Large showed that revenue from trophy hunting represented only two per cent of tourism in Africa and that this tourism revenue is only a small fraction, considering that it is $200 million whereas the economy is $408 billion. Sadly,
there are only 7,000 to 8,000 lions left in captivity, 160 of these in privately owned canned hunting reserves.

Just in closing, Albert Einstein once said, `The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything.' The trade in killing of African lions must stop.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mrs Prentice: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (13:02): I would like to thank the honourable member for La Trobe for bringing the issue of canned hunting to my attention and, through this motion, to the attention of the Australian parliament and wider public. Canned hunting involves the practice of breeding animals for the sole purpose of them being hunted in captivity. Disturbingly, this so-called tourist activity is gaining in popularity, especially when it involves hunting lions and rhinos in South Africa. I understand that people pay up to $40,000 to hunt and kill these animals in an enclosed area in which they are ultimately defenceless and unable to escape. I am sad to say that some tourists pay to pat or walk with young lions at what are misleadingly described as 'conservation parks' when in fact they are breeding centres for animals made subject to these unethical and highly lucrative hunting operations.

Animal welfare is an issue that is close to my heart, and I strongly condemn the hunting of animals in these circumstances, particularly when the animals are endangered. I have long been an advocate for the better treatment of animals, and to that end I support a range of organisations, some local—like Native ARC, a not-for-profit organisation in my electorate that provides medical care and rehabilitation services for injured native wildlife—and some national—like Animals Australia, our peak national animal protection organisation, whose work to investigate and expose animal cruelty has been so important in areas like live export and factory farming. I am also currently the co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of the RSPCA.

I am pleased that there is strong bipartisan support for ensuring that animal welfare remains a priority for Australia and Australians. Australia is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, a multilateral treaty designed to protect endangered plants and animals. In accordance with that treaty and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, Australia has committed to protecting species that are endangered or are at risk of becoming endangered.

I have spoken in this House on multiple occasions in relation to the cruelty around Australia's live export trade. That has been and continues to be an example of Australia falling drastically short of acceptable standards of animal protection and welfare, notwithstanding the introduction of ESCAS. It is telling, for instance, that not one exporter has been prosecuted or has had their export licence suspended for multiple serious violations of ESCAS. I agree with the assessment of RSPCA chief executive Heather Neil, who believes ESCAS continues to set an unacceptably low bar.

I believe that canned hunting is another example of animal cruelty in which Australia is currently complicit by allowing the importation of hunting trophies. By not acting to prevent the importation of hunting trophies, we are effectively supporting an activity which is both cruel and unethical, a form of barbarism that has a direct impact on endangered species we
have committed to protect. A core component of both CITES and the EPBC Act is the application of a permit system to regulate the importation of animal body parts and trophies into Australia. As the law currently stands, a permit may be granted to import species that are listed in appendix II of CITES, which includes species that are at risk of becoming endangered—including lions. That needs to change. The ability to take home part of a hunted and killed animal as a trophy is what sustains these types of hunting operations. If you take away the prize, you take away the game.

To this end, I commend the Minister for the Environment for his recent decision to ban the importation of rhinoceros trophies into Australia. Yet the horrific evidence that we have been shown recently of canned hunting—in particular of lions in South Africa—suggests that the minister must act in extending this ban to other species on the CITES list. For as long as Australian tourists are permitted to return to the country with lion trophies in their luggage, we all remain complicit in the practice of canned hunting. And to be complicit in canned hunting is to stand by while the senseless killing of animals occurs and while endangered species are put at greater risk, in contravention of the standards established under CITES. While canned hunting may not always be illegal, the practice is reprehensible—especially when it masquerades as a form of conservation. I am sure the Australian community would want us to take action to ensure there is no encouragement or tolerance of canned hunting in our customs regulations.

For all these reasons, I give my strongest support to the terms of the motion before us, and I urge the government to take action to ban the importation of animal parts and trophies of any species listed in CITES, including lions, so that Australia can do its part in bringing the abhorrent practice of canned hunting to an end.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (13:06): I rise to speak in support of this motion by the member for La Trobe, and I want to thank the member for bringing this practice of canned hunting to the attention of the House. This is the practice of raising animals, some of which are endangered, in captivity in order for them to be ‘hunted’ in an enclosed area as trophy kills for wealthy customers.

Because the business is legal and the animals are not wild born, it makes the importation of the trophies, such as pelts and skulls, perfectly legal. There remains a loophole in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species—CITES—that this parliament must address. As the trophies were legally obtained, they are allowed to bypass the trade in endangered species regulations.

The process of breeding animals for hunting is a worldwide reality. These canned hunts can be found in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana for African game species, and in more than 1,000 private hunting lodges across the USA. Some of the animals bred to be hunted at these private reserves in the USA are listed as extinct in the wild, like the scimitar-horned oryx. This raises the question of what constitutes extinction. Can a species be classed as endangered, or indeed extinct, in the wild if it is being successfully bred in captivity? And, if it can be bred in captivity, surely it is incumbent upon us to propagate the species back to the wild, not hunt it in purpose-built reserves.

I feel it is important to make the distinction between hunting and canned hunting, and between hunting as a sport and shooting in order to cull animals that are pests in our environment. In Australia, hunters provide a valuable service for farmers and conservation
efforts alike. Introduced species like foxes, rabbits, feral cats and dogs, and wild pigs kill native species, destroy habitat as well as crops, and prey on livestock. Culling programs help to contain the number of kangaroos, now estimated at over 34 million by the Department of the Environment. This estimate only covers the areas where commercial culling occurs—the rest of the country is not monitored, so the actual number is far higher.

Canned hunting involves keeping an animal in an area where it has no chance of escape, but with enough running room for the hunters to enjoy a level of challenge in a so-called 'fair' chase—animals that in many cases, I understand, have been hand raised and have lost their fear of humans. Some even approach these alleged hunters seeking food.

Whilst I was never a supporter, hunting used to be about skill, patience and the ability to overcome the natural obstacles. But this is not hunting that serves any purpose. This is shooting an endangered animal in a controlled environment for so-called fun.

As this practice is carried out beyond our borders and outside of our laws, what can we do to help end this sport and the trade in trophies that flows from it? The obvious answer is to amend the existing convention on international trade in endangered species so that no distinction is made as to the source of the trophy. Wild or canned hunting of an endangered species must be listed as equally unacceptable. Can you imagine the difference to wild populations if the numbers of animals bred for the sport were released? That could be enough to bring some species back from the brink of extinction. Frankly, I call this sport un-Australian. Australians pride themselves on living by the creed of a fair go. Where is the fair go for these animals?

I want to again thank the member for La Trobe for alerting the House to this unacceptable practice. I strongly urge every member of this House to support this motion and I ask the environment minister to put into legislation that an endangered animal is endangered no matter its origin and ban the importation of trophies from all hunts in all circumstances. I commend this motion to the House.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (13:11): I would like to commence my contribution to the debate by commending the member for La Trobe on bringing this to the parliament. I also note that this is not the first time he has spoken on this issue and I know that he is totally committed to stopping this cruel practice that takes place throughout the world.

For the record, canned hunting is trophy hunting in which an animal is kept in a confined area, reducing their chance of escape by being fenced in, which really increases the likelihood that the hunter will have some success. It is changing the odds—even though the odds are already in favour of the hunter, it is changing them and making it much more likely that that hunter will be able to score a trophy that he or she can take home. The target animal is unfairly prevented from escaping the hunter, either by physical constraints or by mental constraints. They are tame. A lot of the animals involved in canned hunting have been brought up in captivity. They have been separated from their mothers at a fairly young age and are held in captivity. They gain a certain trust in humans.

I was reading of where young lions are taken away from their mothers. The common explanation is, 'That's because the mother had no milk.' In reality, that is a very, very rare occurrence in the wild. Most lionesses do have milk. They say that, if this happens, they are really protecting the species. Animal welfare experts disagree with this. They say that
breeders are removing the cubs from their mothers because the lionesses become quickly fertile, so they can breed more lions. These breeders tell you that they remove the cubs, as I said, because the lionesses have no milk, but that has never been seen in the wild.

Trophy hunters are attracted to a situation where the animal is in an enclosed space and has some level of trust of human beings. I am not a person who supports hunting, but, to my way of thinking, this is quite a brutal and inhumane—

**An honourable member:** Cowardly.

**Ms HALL:** and cowardly attack on defenceless animals. They can to a degree protect themselves, but, at the end of the day, they are in no way able to stand up to that hunter who wants a trophy for the wall back home. I look at it and think: ‘What can we do?’ This predominantly happens in South Africa. There have been attempts to ban it, but the High Court there overturned it. I think the only way that we can have a real impact on this canned hunting is through customs regulation, is the member for Fremantle mentioned, and banning the importation of animal parts.

The CITES—the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora—aims to ensure that the international trade in species of endangered animals and plants does not threaten their survival. It also covers a number of other points but it is a very important convention and one that we as a nation need to be 100 per cent committed to. I call on my colleagues in this House today to join the member for Latrobe to bring about an end to this very unfair, cowardly canned hunting throughout the world.

**Mr ENTSCH** (Leichhardt) (13:16): Last year I had the opportunity of attending a briefing on canned hunting with the member for La Trobe and was very disturbed to learn about the extent of the practice in Africa. I generally support hunting. It is vital when you are talking about culling of feral animals like feral pigs, horses and cattle—you get problems with camels and all sorts of things—that have a serious negative impact on our environment. I also do not have a problem with trophy hunting, to be quite honest.

The member for Shortland mentioned CITES. There is a process whereby you can get approval for taking a trophy animal. I have been arguing very strongly that in Australia, as part of our crocodile management program, large animals that are creating a problem—a limited number, particularly in Indigenous communities—could be made available for trophy hunters and, in that way, contribute to the management of this species. This happens around the world where there needs to be culls of wild animal populations to manage those populations. There is a place where the animal, rather than just being shot and disposed of, can actually be taken for a price and then that money goes back into conservation.

But we are talking about a very different practice altogether in relation to canned hunting. It is a very brutal practice involving hand raising of animals in captivity and then, when they become large enough or at a time when they believe they can be sold as a trophy, they are put into enclosures—and if they find they are a little bit difficult to hunt, often these animals are in some way incapacitated—where they can be very easily and ruthlessly hunted down.

The raising in captivity that lessens the natural fear-and-flight responses normally prompted when wild animals see people. It makes the animal a very easy target and a guaranteed kill. I ask the question: ‘Is this fair?’
It is not often we quote a thrash metal band in this chamber, but Megadeth's song, *Countdown to Extinction*, highlights the practice perfectly:

Endangered species, caged in fright  
Shot in cold blood, no chance to fight  
The stage is set, now pay the price.  
An ego boost, don't think twice  
Technology, the battle's unfair  
You pull the hammer without a care  
Squeeze the trigger that makes you 'Man'  
Pseudo-safari, the hunt is canned  
That says a hell of a lot. We know how the circle of life is meant to work, but this is seriously a raw deal when it comes to these creatures.

To make matters worse there is quite a significant number of young Australians—predominantly young women—who travel to Africa each year to work in 'conservation' parks where they pay around $700 a week to nurture orphan lions back into the wild. Unbeknownst to these young people, many of these conservation parks are actually breeding grounds for the canned lion industry. This is a gross deception and I encourage young Australians who are thinking about doing this to look very carefully at what the consequences of their commitment to these animals really is and where these animals end up.

Australia must condemn this practice of canned lion hunting and the importation of any animal parts as a result of canned hunting. Our proposals for new lion import restrictions follow research by the Australia Institute that looked at how it could affect the African economy if our country restricted the importation of African lion trophies. The research found that introducing our restrictions would successfully dissuade Australian tourists from participating in canned lion trophy hunting. The research also found that it would have minimal impact on the African countries involved. I think we also need to have education out there for young women, to make sure that these people get the message so that they do not do this.

The other thing that worries me particularly about this is the way that they are crossing lions and tigers and going for the mutations—for the white ones and that sort of thing: the different genetics there. It is absolutely destroying the genetics of these creatures, and it is just purely for the trophy. In fact, it needs to be stopped and to be stopped very quickly. Australia must condemn canned hunting and the importation of any species into the country as a result of canned hunting. It is the right decision—(Time expired)

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (13:21): I congratulate the member for La Trobe—not just in the usual formal sense that we do for bringing a resolution here, but for a persistent campaign around the subject. Clearly, we heard from the previous speaker that he has had briefings in the parliament. He has obviously been in close contact with the minister and one would think that the change with regard to rhinos has something to do with his activity. This all arises from a constituent coming in and alerting the member about this issue, so I just want to congratulate him very clearly on all this activity.

When I saw this resolution I was first reminded of Nicolae Ceausescu, the despot of Romania, who was alleged to have killed 4,000 European brown bears during his reign and to
have received 270 gold medals. These gold medals were apparently based on the type of kill you do. He had a rule, apparently, that nobody was allowed to kill more animals than he did on any of the hunts; he had a lot of the other Eastern bloc leaders there for hunting trips. Apparently what he used to do back then was to drug the animals so they were incapable of being missed. I think that is an extreme version of what we are talking about.

Obviously, the situation has a number of issues. The previous speaker referred to breeding for exotic strains, but there is also a very big danger of inbreeding. There is the situation where they have found the concentration of diseases being accentuated by these breeding patterns. There is the situation that every speaker has talked about: the animals become very tame. They are not fearful and they are used to the particular ways in which they are fed. So in actual fact, given that they are also enclosed, it is a very one-sided struggle.

The American hunter, Ted Kerasote, said:

'Canned hunting' is a misnomer. More accurately defined as 'shooting animals in small enclosures,' the activity has nothing to do with the motives that inform authentic hunting: procuring healthy, organic food; participating in the timeless cycles of birth, death, and nurturing; honoring the lives that support us; and reconnection with wildness. No matter where one stands on hunting—vehemently opposed to it or seeing it as yet another way to live sustainably on Earth—one ought to decry shooting animals behind fences.

Whilst we have had a concentration on the question of essentially impoverished southern African countries which need the dollars, in reading about this I was also alerted to the growing practice in the United States. It is estimated that in any one year there are 1,000 instances of this. The Humane Society of America has said that animals that range between extinct in the wild and vulnerable—the various classifications between those two—include scimitar-horned oryx, Nubian ibex and European bison, and that a number of others are subject to this in the United States. They are particularly concerned about this issue of disease prevalence that I refer to.

We have got a situation where we have got enough problems with poaching in regard to the decline of the rhinoceros. It was estimated that, with the current state, deaths will overtake births in the next four years. We see a fairly disturbing gross inability of governments to have enough money to give rangers the kind of weaponry that the poachers have. We have got enough difficulties as it is without giving encouragement to people to go out there further. As some people have eluded to, there is also a very big question mark about how some of the younger animals are procured in the first place and whether there are deaths related to that.

I want to join with the speakers and commend what the member described as cruel and barbaric practices. Both he and the member for Fremantle in particular have talked about strengthening Australia's activity around CITES even further, whether it is by a permit system and the minister being involved at the end of the road or whether it is by widening what is not permitted. This is a very important resolution and I am pleased to see that on both sides of the parliament members are concerned by this practice.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (13:26): I rise to speak on the member for La Trobe's motion. Firstly, in relation to something the previous speaker referred to, I am not sure 'canned' is a word I would use. 'Fenced', certainly, and obviously a fence, if it is not too big, makes sure they can be found. 'Canned' is a word I would not use. However, perhaps that is semantics.
Such shooting is not something I would ever want to be involved in, and I am a person who owns rifles and does quite a bit of shooting—well, I used to. I do not get much time to now.

However, while I totally agree with what the speaker is talking about, it is not something I would want to do. I think we have got to be very careful how we bring about a result on it. The countries which we are referring to, which are mostly African countries, have shown—and we have always known—that if you put a value on something you actually ensure its survival. I am talking about ordinary hunting and one thing and another. If you are a poacher in those parts of Africa where they do have a value on their wildlife then you are poaching at risk of your life because they will shoot you. The people who run those countries and run those parks go out there looking for poachers. You actually have to pay a lot of money for a licence to go out and legitimately hunt and take trophies home. All those things cost a lot of money and they do provide a lot of jobs.

While I totally agree with and empathise with what the member is saying, how we deal with it is very hard from our end. Those countries where that kind of hunting has gone on could stop the export of trophies far more easily than we. I am not quite sure how Australia could, and I would not want to stop ordinary, legitimate hunting because of it, because the countries concerned have too much to lose. I have known a lot of people that have gone over there. Certainly, I have never met anyone that has confessed to that kind of hunting. It is not hunting, that kind of killing, and I do not doubt that Australians have been involved in it. However, I think it would be a very small percentage of that kind of trophy that comes back to Australia.

I just think that for us to deal with this, it has first got to be dealt with by the country where it occurs. I am not quite sure how it would be done. We could pass a law saying you cannot bring back a trophy that has been hunted in an enclosure where the animal had no opportunity to escape et cetera. How in heaven’s name would you ever make that a fact? How would you make that doable? I do not know. It is much more doable in the country of origin. But I do agree with the emphasis of what is being said. It is not something I would ever do. It is not something anyone I have ever gone out shooting with would ever do. It is a shocking way to deal with any animal.

Actually, what is being said not so much about the genetics but about the behaviour of animals, particularly wild animals, in that situation, definitely is true. You can see it any stock you would like to mention, not just wild ones. When you put them in a totally unnatural environment, their habits and everything changes—which is all bad. But I do know that in countries like Namibia, Botswana and the others hunting the proper way is a very big deal for them. It ensures the survival of the animal, because so much value is placed on it. The countries, the hunters, the game parks and everybody involved will hunt down poachers like nothing you have ever seen—and, as I understand it, they generally do not worry too much about taking them back for trial. They place a lot of value on their animals and you pay a lot of money to go there to hunt.

As I said before, I pretty much agree with the emphasis of the motion but I am somewhat at a loss to know how we can deal with it in Australia. I do think any pressure we can put on those countries where it occurs is fine, but they are not going to find it that easy to deal with either, much as it needs to be dealt with.

Debate interrupted.
Proceedings suspended from 13:31 to 16:00

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Scullin Electorate: Adviceline Injury Lawyers

Mr GILES (Scullin) (16:00): Last week I had the pleasure and privilege to formally open the new office of Adviceline Injury Lawyers in Epping. In a very full room, I was joined by many former legal colleagues, a large number of community members, representatives of the Australian Education Union and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union as well as the captain of the Melbourne United basketball team, Mark Worthington, for a great and celebratory evening.

Epping and Melbourne's outer north, more generally, have not been well serviced by plaintiff law firms, and there is significant unmet demand for legal representation from the people of Melbourne's outer north. This demand comes from people who have been injured in workplace incidents, involved in transport accidents or are victims of medical negligence.

Access to justice for these people is an essential part of our democracy. Legal representation should not just be for those who can afford it nor locked away in central business districts. I am very pleased that this office will go some way to addressing this deficit of justice. It is already making a difference and it recognises how significant an experience it is to go and see a lawyer, particularly after the trauma of a serious accident.

I thank my friend and former colleague Andrea Tsalamandris for her generosity in inviting me to this event. I also pay tribute to Deidre Petrakis and the other lawyers and staff who work at this office, and of course Bridget McDowell who did a fantastic job in organising and running the event.

I know from my experience that the people at this firm and its new office will provide high-quality legal advice for the people in Melbourne's outer north in an environment that is welcoming and convenient and can improve access to justice in the Scullin electorate.

Durack Electorate: Pilbara Womens Network

Ms PRICE (Durack) (16:02): Once again, I am reminded of the strength of the community based groups that I encounter in my electorate of Durack. The Pilbara Womens Network is no exception with more than 100 women attending a luncheon in Karratha late last year with the theme of reinventing yourself.

At this sell-out event, I joined Telstra Western Australian Businesswoman of the Year Sonja Cox and entrepreneur Robyn Henderson as guest speakers, and I have to say that the strength, diversity, skill and business acumen of the 100-plus women in the room outshone what we, as presenters, could offer.

These women from all walks of life, collectively, represented and celebrated the Pilbara and their part in realising its improbable economic development as well as their personal development and the opportunities that they have been afforded and have used to their advantage.

The women of the Pilbara live in an environment of constant change—it is their norm. They are proficient at adapting and capitalising on opportunity. Many of these women work in or own businesses and are duly proud of their success.
I would urge you to look no further than the Pilbara to see successful businesswomen in action. We could all learn a great deal from the women of the Pilbara—they are adventurers, pioneers but, most of all, entrepreneurs.

**Shortland Electorate: Lake Macquarie Volunteer of the Year**

*Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:03):* Today I would like to pay tribute to the Lake Macquarie Volunteer of the Year, Steve Dewar. Steve is an old friend of mine. He used to live in Shortland electorate. He has now moved to the other side of the lake and lives in Charlton electorate.

Steve is a person who epitomises volunteer work and commitment to his community. Steve retired a couple of years ago and, prior to that, he was a teacher at Belmont High School and also Northlakes High School within Shortland electorate.

He is the type of person who is totally dedicated to landcare, the environment and helping other people. When they wrote the model for what a volunteer should be, Steve Dewar was it.

He spends countless hours working on the environment, making sure that parks, his pet project, continue to flourish. In addition to that, he provides support to other volunteers. Steve is a fantastic role model for young people. Steve is a fantastic asset to Lake Macquarie and it gives me great pleasure to pay tribute to Steve in the parliament today.

**Hume Electorate: Australia Day Honours**

*Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (16:05):* I would like to congratulate two residents from the Hume electorate who were deservedly acknowledged in this year's Australia Day honours.

Firstly, to Crookwell's Denis Marshall, who received a Medal in the Order of Australia for his tireless work in aged care over many decades. Residents of the Upper Lachlan Shire are served by two excellent aged-care facilities, Viewhaven Lodge in Crookwell and Sunset Lodge in Taralga. Denis has played an integral part in the development of both. Denis's efforts have allowed the elderly in Upper Lachlan to stay in their own communities, be close to family and friends, and be cared for by their own. No-one in Crookwell is more proud of Denis than his devoted wife Lillian, herself a driving force in the local CWA.

Goulburn's Gary Worboys was also honoured on Australia Day, receiving the Australian Police Medal for his distinguished service over more than 30 years in the New South Wales Police Force. This includes many years in the southern NSW region where he has developed strong ties with the local community and earned a great deal of respect and many friends in the process. Placing a strong emphasis on community engagement has been a hallmark of Assistant Commissioner Worboys' approach to policing and it is much appreciated by the local community.

Congratulations to all Hume residents acknowledged as their local community's citizen of the year in 2015. We appreciate all you do in your extraordinary service to others.

**Parramatta Electorate: Australia Day Honours**

*Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (16:06):* This year I had the pleasure of celebrating Australia Day with the Maltese Community Council of New South Wales. The Maltese community celebrated the day in Merrylands at the Holroyd Centre with the theme 'We are one but we are many', a fitting tribute to Parramatta and Western Sydney's multiculturalism. Dr Barry York, OAM, a Maltese historian, delivered the key note address, giving a fine illustration of his
family's experience migrating to Australia 60 years ago. The Maltese choir, directed by Marisa Previtera, with 15-year old Maltese Australian soloist A-Lee, delivered a fantastic performance.

Charmaine Cassar delivered a speech on behalf of the Maltese Australia Youth Committee. The future of the Maltese Australian community is in good hands with young adults like Charmaine. There were also a number of Maltese Australian recipients of the Order of Australia in attendance: Mr Sam Vella, Mr Lino Vella, Mrs Doris Athanasio, Mr Lawrence Dimech and Mrs Nancy Borg Serg.

Thank you to the hard work of the Maltese Community Council of New South Wales who organised the day—in particular, Lawrence Dimech, the president—and the Maltese Community Council Australia Day Celebration Organising Committee, including Emanuel Camilleri, Marelene Dimech, Frances Montesin, Charmaine Cassar and Marisa Previtera. Well done and thank you.

**Murray Electorate: Youth Unemployment**

**Dr STONE** (Murray) (16:08): I have 25.3 per cent of the 15- to 24-year-old population of Shepparton—the ABS region—out of work. That is over 4,000 young people in Shepparton and nearby who cannot get work, or in reality have given up trying. So I invited the Assistant Minister for Employment, the Hon. Luke Hartsuyker, to my electorate just last week to become better acquainted with this terrible social and economic problem—a problem that is two sides of the one coin. We began the day with a Work for the Dole pilot program where we saw six or seven excellent young men helping to build a new botanical garden. We ended the day with some 20 employer representatives who said that they cannot get good people or any people to respond to job advertisements. They included electrical, dairy, abattoirs, transport operators and representatives from our ethnic council, and Indigenous representatives. We heard them say, 'Individuals who are minorities cannot get work' or 'We have business enterprises that are being stymied and held back because we cannot get skilled, unskilled or even trainee level people to give it a go.'

This is a terrible dilemma. On the one hand, we have significant unemployment; on the other hand, we cannot find the people to do these jobs. We have to look hard at things like drivers licences, our welfare system, our taxation system and our schools and education system. This is too big a tragedy to leave unresolved.

**Braddon Electorate: First World War Commemorations**

**Mr WHITELEY** (Braddon) (16:09): On Monday 16 February and Tuesday 17 February, I will have the honour of hosting senior historian in the military history section of the Australian War Memorial Mr Aaron Pegram for two public presentations in my electorate and three school visits on Australia's commitment in the First World War. Saturday, 25 April 2015 will mark 100 years since the Anzacs landed at Gallipoli. Over 8,000 men were killed, and over 19,000 were wounded in one of the most horrific of all battles in human history.

That we as a nation remember the sacrifice of those who fought, and commemorate the centenary of that battle, is important for the memory of those who fought and their families but also for the nation who looks to those who fought at Gallipoli as exemplars of courage, mateship and tenacity. The history of events that led to the outbreak of the Great War and Australia's involvement on the Western Front, however, are less well known despite being
just as bloody and just as horrific. That is why I have invited Mr Pegram from the Australian War Memorial to visit the north-west coast. He will help us to understand more of Australia's involvement at the outbreak of the war in German New Guinea, the war at sea and the Gallipoli campaign, Sinai, Palestine, the Western Front and the legacies of the First World War.

These important events will be held on 16 February at the Devonport RSL at 7 pm and at the Burnie Art Gallery on 17 February at 7 pm. Mr Pegram will also meet students and speak to students at Reece High School, Burnie High School and Parklands High School. More information is available on my website.

**Shortland Electorate: Youth of the Year**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:11): Last Wednesday night I attended the Swansea Lions Club Youth of the Year event. It was an absolutely fantastic experience listening to the four young people make their final speeches. There was Jayde Robertson from Swansea High School, who has been a previous winner of my Jill Hall citizenship award. There was Chloe Harvey from Belmont High School, who made a fantastic presentation, and Thomas Johnson from Belmont High School, who is a young man who has been involved in practically everything in the community and has had to fight adversity and illness to achieve what he has achieved. Then there was the winner—Amber Lawrence. She comes from Warners Bay High School. She is a year 12 student. She was a member of the student executive last year and has been a peer support leader. She is an outstanding young woman. She made fantastic speeches on the night—both her impromptu speech and prepared speech—as did all the others.

Thomas Johnson received the award for the best speeches but Amber, as I mentioned, was the successful winner on the night. There is not a thing that Amber is not involved in. Listening to these people was inspirational. I must say, I learnt from each and every one of their speeches.

**Edwardstown Meals on Wheels**

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (16:12): I rise today to recognise the terrific work of the Edwardstown Meals on Wheels branch. A couple of weeks ago I was privileged to spend the morning volunteering with the branch, when I donned the apron and assisted preparing meals. It was good, when I was preparing the meals, to talk to some of the volunteers who have been providing valuable services for many years.

I also enjoyed the opportunity to help deliver the meals. I joined Kim, who is a job seeker; Colin, the volunteer coordinator; Brenda, Stephanie and Don—a handful of others of the over 100 incredible Edwardstown Meals on Wheels volunteers. The Edwardstown Meals on Wheels prepares an average of 120 meals a day and have delivered over 1½ million meals for all those in need in the Hindmarsh the electorate.

I learnt firsthand about the support received from Meals on Wheels—and it is more than just a meal. From Plympton to Glandore and Edwardstown, they took me on a journey. People took us into their homes and welcomed our attendance and support—the social contact. I witnessed first hand the great appreciation of the visits of the Meals on Wheels volunteers.

I would like to thank President Colin and his wife and secretary Maria Humphreys for the invitation to join them for the morning. In closing, I also want to pay tribute to the Rotary
Club of Edwardstown, which provides a driver each day for the Edwardstown Meals on Wheels. The Rotary Club helped set up the Meals on Wheels branch many years ago. It is a great example of the two organisations working together.

**National Information Centre on Retirement Investments**

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:14): This morning I met with Wendy Schlig, the CEO of the National Information Centre on Retirement Investments, NICRI—an organisation which had received federal government funding since 1989 to provide consumers with information and financial guidance on superannuation, residential aged care fees and redundancy. This is ironic given that NICRI staff will all be redundant thanks to the unfair decision of this Abbott government.

NICRI has been receiving about $654,000 a year. It employs people with a technical and financial background. It runs seminars and ensures consumers have the information they need to make appropriate decisions concerning their aged-care needs and retirement issues with confidence. They were so good that the government's aged-care telephone operators often referred people to them to explain aged-care fees. So it came as quite a shock to discover they were no longer being funded.

Just days before Christmas in 2014, Wendy received an email impersonally addressed 'Dear Grant Applicant' which informed her that NICRI was no longer receiving government funding. After 25 years of service with bipartisan support, all they received was a stock standard email. Every attempt to find out why they were no longer being funded has been rebuffed by this government. To date NICRI does not know why they have been defunded, and the government is not likely to inform them any time soon. This government, the Abbott government, wonders why the people of Australia have lost confidence in them.

**O'Connor Electorate: Bushfires**

Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (16:16): Today I rise to commend the efforts of firefighters and support personnel who worked tirelessly over the past few weeks to fight two uncontrollable bushfires in my electorate of O'Connor. Last Thursday I visited Pemberton—where residents of the township of Northcliffe had been evacuated to the Pemberton sports centre—while over 250 firefighters waged a ground battle in the tall timber of the karri forest and an aerial assault by water bombers and helicopters tankers continued.

Several dairies and many farms, sheds and dwellings, as well as the township of Northcliffe, were saved from certain devastation as the fire swept through over 80,000 hectares of forest and pasture. I congratulate the tireless work of incident controller, Greg Mair, and his staff at the Department of Parks and Wildlife who were near exhaustion when he briefed me on the situation while touring the incident headquarters in Pemberton.

I applaud the coordinated efforts of the emergency services, ambulance, fire and police together with support organisations including Telstra, the Department of Agriculture, representatives from the departments of social services, health and education, Western Power and the Shire of Manjimup. I also commend Manjimup Shire President Wade de Campo and CEO Andrew Campbell for their compassionate leadership in this crisis.

On Friday WA Premier Colin Barnett declared the area a natural disaster activating the joint Commonwealth-state Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, NDRRA, and paving the way for emergency financial assistance and longer-term funding of restoration of
lost infrastructure. I would also like to thank those unsung heroes, the members of the CWA and community members, who provided food for the firefighters, took in displaced families and their pets, or made donations of hay and animal feed.

Parramatta Electorate: Australia Day

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (16:17): In the last couple of weeks I have had the extraordinary privilege of celebrating Australia Day with a range of communities in my electorate from Lebanese to Maltese, Indian and Tamil. Almost every culture lives in Parramatta. We have the world in us. The thing that struck me most, having spent those days with them, was the extraordinary love they show for their first country. They build their lives in this country based on this foundation of strength, of knowing who they are, where they came from and who came before them. They bring that culture to this country and build a life based on this strength.

A little later in the afternoon on Australia Day, I was welcomed to country by Uncle Greg, one of the Burramattagal clan of the Darug nation. I realised at that point that I did not know a single word of the language which was spoken on the land on which I live. It occurred to me that as a nation we might be a profoundly different and more wonderful nation if we carried in our hearts the love of what came before us that so many of our new migrants carry for their first country.

I committed to do better. I committed to learn at least some words in the language of the land on which I live and find out more about the culture that came before the one that I live now. We can be a much better nation if we move into the future based on the strength and love of our past.

Barton Electorate: 24th Greek Epiphany Ceremony and Blessing of the Waters

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (16:19): I was proud to have taken part recently in the 24th Greek Epiphany Ceremony and Blessing of the Waters held at Yarra Bay, La Perouse. This annual tradition, which normally takes place on the Sunday after the Greek Orthodox feast of the Epiphany, is performed to bless the water following on from the story of John the Baptist. This event involves praying and then throwing a crucifix, by the archbishop, into the midst of a body of water often a river, lake or shoreline. Those taking part in the feast-day proceedings then dive into the water to retrieve the crucifix, which upon recovery is handed to the archbishop, who presents the winner with the cross. This feast signifies the cleansing and renewal of the man through the blessing of and immersion in a body of water, commemorating John the Baptist's blessing of Jesus in the river Jordan, where, tradition and Scripture tell us, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove.

It was a great honour for me to join His Grace Bishop Seraphim, who led the ritual ushering in this significant event, which is regarded as one of the more significant feasts on the Orthodox Christian calendar. The winner of the event this year was 24-year-old Pasialas. I thank the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese for organising the event and for giving all of us an opportunity to witness the modern incarnation of this ancient tradition.

Liberal Party Leadership

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce) (16:20): What a momentous day it has been. We have a government that said, 'We're going to stop the boats,' that said, 'We're going to stop this, we're going to stop that.' But the one thing they could not stop was a spill motion. They could not
stop a spill motion attempting to unseat a Prime Minister after 16 months. I have to say—as someone who has had some involvement in these issues over the years!—16 months is pretty quick. It took me a lot longer than that, despite what you may have read! But the fact is that there was a move in this direction after 16 months. When you look at the votes against, they were 39 and an abstention. Let's face it: that is really 40. That is 40, in a situation where 61 supported the Prime Minister.

But then, let us remember, if we were seeing a situation where ministerial solidarity and cabinet solidarity were enforced, we are talking about a situation where 60 per cent plus of the back bench—60 per cent plus of those who are regularly in their electorates, 60 per cent plus of those who are actually in contact with the general community, 60 per cent plus of the people who need to respond to that community—said no to this Prime Minister.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones) interjecting—

Mr Griffin: Deputy Speaker Jones, I thank you for the intervention. I am doing the best I can in the circumstances—and I am certainly making a better fist of it than the government is!

Ryan Electorate: Fig Tree Farmers Markets

Mrs Prentice (Ryan) (16:22): Last Wednesday I had the honour of being invited to officially open the new Fig Tree Farmers Market in Fig Tree Pocket. Fig Tree Pocket is a beautiful suburb on the river in my electorate of Ryan, and nestled in the heart of that wonderful suburb is Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary. Lone Pine sanctuary is the first zoo in the world, and the largest, for koalas—over 130 koalas—and it is rated one of the top 10 zoos in the world. It is a wonderful place to bring family and friends. Not only do they have koalas; they have lots of other Australian animals. It has always been a heart of that suburb and a heart of Brisbane. We often see it in publicity when we have visiting dignitaries in town, like those for the G20 or for the Brisbane International. So what a wonderful place to start some farmers markets.

I congratulate Erica and John Parker, who have been responsible for many other local farmers markets in the district. These markets are now going to be held every Wednesday in the afternoon. So, unlike other markets, which are regularly held in the early morning or on the weekend, these ones are going to cater for those people coming home from school or even an early dinner. That was the case last Wednesday, when we saw hundreds of people turn up for this wonderful event, including schoolchildren meeting their father there after school with their mother and having dinner. The great thing about these markets is that Erica and John insist that it is always local farmers' produce; they truly are locals. I congratulate them on this initiative and I thank Robert and Taco from Lone Pine for supporting this great event.

Mallee Electorate: Christian Emergency Food Centre

Mr Broad (Mallee) (16:24): I rise to talk about the Horsham Christian community food bank, a great organisation in Horsham that I have had the pleasure of visiting several times. They have over 70 volunteers, people who come and give their time. They have school groups who have donated money and food. At a lot of the local churches, every week, people put in food as part of the collection plate, and they send it down there.

I put on the record that I am very disappointed that when they sought funding this year for a grant of $50,000, which they have been receiving year in, year out, they were unsuccessful.
This is actually a good expenditure of taxpayer dollars—$50,000 of Australian taxpayers' money. That pays for power and the running costs of the refrigerator et cetera. Combined with 70 volunteers, it deals with drought-affected farmers who quietly come in the back door. It deals with women in cases where they are fleeing from domestic violence. It deals with some of the poorest in a regional country town. I am very disappointed that the government, the government that I am a part of, has not come up with the $50,000 to fund this. I am going to fight for this, because there are very few times when you can actually combine $50,000 with the work of 70 volunteers to achieve so much good. This is something worth funding.

**Blair Electorate: Volunteer and Club Sign on Day**

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:25): Last Saturday I attended Lowood Volunteer and Club Sign On Day, sponsored by the Somerset Regional Council. This Saturday I will be in Esk doing the same thing. I did my mobile office last Saturday with Councillor Jim Madden, the new Labor member for Ipswich West. I want to pay tribute to Amy Stockwell, who is the community and volunteers coordinator at the Somerset Regional Council, for the great work she did to make sure that that particular event, which was located at Lowood State Primary School, took place.

I look forward to what is going to happen in Esk and Kilcoy in the next few weeks. The great community groups of the Brisbane Valley—now known as the Somerset region—were at Lowood in numbers. I want to thank them for the work they do. I also want to thank Trax church, which is a Pentecostal church that gives out lots of wonderful food hampers to people in need, families and individuals, in the Lowood region. I thank the Wivenhoe Pony Club, who have a great relationship with the Ipswich Pony Club, which I am involved in with Allen Zahnow and am a great supporter of. I want to thank them for the work they do. There is a lot of interest in equine activities in the area, particularly equestrian. Seeing the young people learn those skills really encourages me, and it is also a great pastime for a lot of people. I want to thank the Fernvale Lions and the rural fire brigades for their participation in that event. I congratulate the Somerset Regional Council for the work they do.

**JBS Swift-Primo Merger**

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (16:27): I rise today to express my disappointment at the ACCC’s decision not to oppose the merger of JBS Swift and the Primo meat company. Farmers and stock buyers in my electorate are very concerned that this acquisition will dramatically reduce the competition in the market in western New South Wales and western Queensland. I think some of the comments made by ACCC chairman Rod Sims indicated that the ACCC probably did not grasp the nature of the beef industry in that part of the world. One of the statements was that, with two meatworks 500 kilometres apart, there would not be any issue with competition. Livestock move much further distances to market. The other point to make regarding the statement that competition would not be affected is that, if you have two buyers from the same company operating in the same market, I think it would be ridiculous to think that they would actually be bidding against each other.

Primo actually do contract kills for Coles supermarkets. I understand that that will be stopped, which will also reduce competition. One buyer in western New South Wales said that this decision would be like allowing Coles or Woolworths to purchase Aldi. *(Time expired)*
Fraser Electorate: United Nations Youth Australia

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (16:28): I would like to acknowledge the work of United Nations Youth Australia and their role in educating young people in my electorate. UN Youth is Australia's largest by youth for youth organisation, focusing on peer-to-peer education. With thousands of volunteers over the country, the organisation runs major national events, including debating championships and international relations conferences. In particular, I want to take note of their overseas development tours to Timor-Leste and the Middle East. A student of the Australian National University, Chloe Kelly, is director of Pacific Project 2015, the two-week trip to Timor-Leste, which multiple young people in my electorate have benefited from over the years. UN Youth's annual territory conference this year, hosted in my electorate and convened by ANU student Laura Bryant, is another opportunity for young Canberrans to learn about the United Nations and Australia's place in the world. But it is just one of many such events that occur throughout the year to improve the understanding that young people have of international relations.

The work of the organisation would not be possible without the tireless dedication of its thousands of young volunteers, such as ACT president Allen Chen and another young Canberran, Arisha Arif, who last year served as the organisation's national youth representation director. Volunteers like this are themselves taking time out of school or university to work with other young people and help build their interest in international relations and human rights. I pay tribute to their efforts to open young eyes to the world.

Robertson Electorate: St Joseph's Workshop

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (16:30): I want to place on record my appreciation of and thanks to the hardworking volunteers at St Joseph's Workshop in West Gosford. The volunteers at St Joseph's have served our community for 18 years now. Every week, around 60 local volunteers from Woy Woy, Ettalong, Terrigal and many other suburbs around the coast give selflessly of their time, sometimes up to six days a week in the workshop, for the benefit of others less fortunate in our community.

So it was a real honour to be able to join them last week for morning tea and to see firsthand their craftsmanship and their expertise in turning recycled offcuts of wood and materials into really beautiful furniture and toys. They take orders from Saint Vincent de Paul shops around New South Wales, where their furniture sells for a fraction of what you would pay at a large retail outlet and where every cent raised goes towards the work of St Vincent de Paul in our community. Each year, they raise around $60,000 to $70,000 by producing around 1,000 outstanding individually made pieces.

I really want to pay tribute to Charlie, who has been involved in the workshop since its inception and who, to this day, continues to make wonderful taxis, trucks and wooden cars for children. Joe Everett and Steve Hood showed me how to make chests of drawers and told me about the enormous satisfaction they get, making a difference through their skills and their time while volunteering at St Joseph's. Ken Wilson, Bob McGrath, Mike Emmett and Ray Robinson also do wonderful work in this community. I thank them all.

Bruce Electorate: Community Groups

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce) (16:32): I thank the member for Shortland for giving me the opportunity to speak, as I have another appointment to attend. Last Friday, I had a meeting
with a number of community groups in the local area, along with the members for Hotham and Isaacs. These community groups provide a range of different essential community services in an area that has real need—groups like the Springvale Benevolent Society and the Dandenong District Benevolent Society, who provide emergency relief for basics such as food and, at times, clothing for people who are in desperate need. Organisations like the Casey Cardinia Community Legal Service provide real assistance around ensuring that people can manage their financial circumstances in a manner which allows them to live with some dignity. Groups like the Vietnamese community of Victoria and the Cambodian Association of Victoria help ethnic communities with particular issues in relation to accessing services and support.

These groups have all had to suffer savage cuts under the government, which has had a massive impact on service delivery for the people that they look after. These are cuts that they were never, ever told about and that were never even hinted at prior to the election. These groups provide front-line services of real need to people with real needs, and the government have deserted them completely and unequivocally. They should be ashamed of what they have done in this area.

Queensland State Election

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Government Whip) (16:33): I rise to inform the House of the current complexities that present themselves on the political landscape of Queensland in the aftermath of the recent elections. With the majority of votes counted in the Queensland state election, there still remains a level of confusion over who exactly is in charge of my fair state. Labor leader Annastacia Palaszczuk today came forward declaring that she believed that she had a majority to claim victory. This contradicts current figures, with Labor at least three seats shy of the 45-seat majority it requires. However, time has a way of revealing all and sundry to us.

The silver lining to be found is that, of the state seats that my electorate encompasses, we retained some and actually saw increases. It is incredible that we would actually pick up some votes when there was a 13 per cent swing against the government. I would like to commend the Beaudesert candidate and sitting member, Jon Krause, for the outstanding work that he did in delivering services on the ground. Jon was returned comfortably. In the Lockyer Valley, the count is still underway for Ian Rickuss, who was up against a high-profile candidate, Pauline Hanson. Can I also acknowledge Ros Bates over at Mudgeeraba, who won just about every booth, and also Sid Cramp, who won the seat of Gaven over a high-profile Independent candidate. I thank the House.

Beard, Dr Alan, OAM

Burger, Mr Kevin

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:35): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the call, because I really want to acknowledge Dr Alan Beard, who was awarded the OAM on Australia Day. He has made enormous contributions to the Hunter community. Alan held executive positions—including club president, club secretary and public officer—of the Rotary Club of Warners Bay from 1978 to 2010. He was instrumental in kicking off the first Loop the Lake bike ride for charity in 1997, and that has become an annual event that raises
thousands of dollars for charity. Alan Beard has been a fantastic member of our local community, and I really want to pay tribute to him.

In addition to paying tribute to Alan Beard, I want to pay tribute to Kevin Burger, who lives in Newcastle and whom I have worked very closely with. He was responsible for the DALE program, which works with young mums who have babies. We did a lot of work together when we had the Brighter Futures program, and he really is committed to young people, to ensuring that they have a second chance in life and to providing the support that they need to be able to continue with their education and then have a future.

So these are two people that have really made enormous contributions to Australia, and their recognition is—

**Summerfield, Ms Paula**

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (16:37): Like the member who just gave the address and like all members of parliament, I love my job on Australia Day, because for a few moments we get thrown into the lives of wonderful, amazing people who do dramatic and challenging things in our communities. We get to meet them. One that I was so excited about this year was Paula Summerfield, who after suffering breast cancer was given a comfort cushion. She said to herself, 'Gee, this has been so good for me in hospital.' They are often so burnt and knocked about that they use those comfort cushions at home as well, or they lose their boobs, so they roll over and they do not have a boob. I met this expressive woman, who told me the story about what she has done to help to help other breast cancer victims, not only in the Warragul and Gippsland area but now spread all over the state. She has 80 people starting with her just in the local area, and she was the Baw Baw Shire Council's Citizen of the Year.

What a pleasure to meet the woman who has committed herself to a need. If you have a bag after an operation, they make a special bag for the bag to go in, out of colourful material that looks great and can be used by these cancer victims. Cancer, including breast cancer and other women's cancers, is a terrible scourge in our community, but we have people like Paula who actually make a difference to real people.

**Blair Electorate: Rosewood**

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:38): Every year on Australia Day, or the nearest Monday, I have the privilege of presiding over the Rosewood New Citizens Ceremony. We had 10 people this year. Before that, we had the Rosewood Citizen of the Year, and I want to commend Arnold Rieck for the great work he has done and the fact that he was the citizen of the year. Arnold has been a great warrior for the environment in the region, actively involved in West Moreton Landcare. His knowledge of the flora and fauna in the Rosewood scrub area is exemplary. No-one knows more than Arnold. He and his wife, Joyce, have done an enormous amount of work not just with Cabanda aged care but with many community groups in the Rosewood region in rural Ipswich.

This year we had 10 new citizens at that ceremony, and I want to thank the Rosewood Lions, who actually run the day. We used to have it at the Rosewood Uniting Church. Now we have it in that wonderful facility that the Prime Minister criticised: the BER hall at Rosewood State Primary School. It is a fantastic facility for the Rosewood region, and I have been to many civic and community events held there. It has been a fantastic facility, and it is a
shame, a tragedy and a disgrace that the Prime Minister should criticise those particular facilities.

**Joseph Banks Secondary College**

*Mr SIMPKINS* (Cowan) (16:40): I would like to congratulate the community in Banksia Grove and the state government of Western Australia for their recent opening of the Joseph Banks Secondary College in the suburb of Banksia Grove. In particular I congratulate Eleanor Hughes, the foundation principal, and all the staff at the school for the wonderful job they have done establishing the high school. This is an excellent facility. Some $49 million has been spent by the state government. It will provide a secondary education option in the area for students graduating from Tapping Primary School, Neerabup Primary School and Spring Hill Primary School. It is a spectacular new building perfectly designed in so many ways. It has options for both trade training and the traditional ATAR subjects. I am very pleased that some years ago I was involved with a petition along with the local state member, Paul Miles, to raise the profile and the need for this high school in the local area.

Once again I congratulate the school community, the school leadership and the state government for their great work in establishing the Joseph Banks Secondary College.

**South Australian Government**

*Mr PASIN* (Barker) (16:41): In recent weeks my office has been inundated with hundreds of letters, emails and phone calls expressing outrage at the political campaign being run by the South Australian state government and the Local Government Association of South Australia on pensioner concessions. This is a campaign deliberately directed at spreading falsehoods and misdirecting responsibility away from those truly responsible for the removal of pensioner concessions: the state Labor government.

The federal government, of course, has traditionally contributed 10 per cent of the costs of these pensioner concessions under the National Partnership agreement. While it is true that 10 per cent will no longer be funded federally, every state and territory government across this nation except, of course, my beloved South Australia has agreed to fund this concession in full. The state Labor government is responsible for 90 per cent of the funding for pensioner concessions. Put another way, they are responsible for $171 out of $190 of the concession. But, instead of dealing with this, they are punishing pensioners, pocketing $98 million and sheeting home blame to someone else.

As a former member of local government, I have been a strong defender of local government. For as long as I can remember, the LGASA has been assiduously apolitical and even-handed, but this is no longer the case. The South Australian Labor government is the highest taxing state government in Australia yet continues to run ballooning deficits. In contrast, the federal Liberal government is increasing federal funding to South Australia by 23 per cent, or $1.8 billion over the forward estimates. *(Time expired)*
Mr Kevin Berger from Newcastle East. He is the founder and executive director of the St Philips Christian College's DALE program. Indeed, the member for Blair accompanied me on a recent visit to that school, which has run some tremendous programs for students who are at risk and have special needs. It has a separate program for young mothers seeking to complete the Higher School Certificate. This is much deserved recognition for the work Kevin has done.

The second Novocastrian I would like to acknowledge is Margaret Sulman, a volunteer at the Calvary Mater Newcastle hospital since 1992. She has had an extraordinary range of roles in the hospital and certainly has helped to coordinate the hospital volunteer program and fundraising efforts.

The third person is Norma Clarke of New Lambton, who has had more than 50 years of service to lawn bowls.

Finally, there is Mr John Rumball, recognised for his long and various contributions to the ambulance service and the Hamilton Returned Services League and for his chairmanship of the Hunter Melanoma Foundation from 1996 to 2000. We are deeply indebted to each of these Novocastrians for their service.

I was honoured to be amongst the very many mourners who attended the funeral of former member for Hunter, Eric Fitzgibbon, the Saturday before last. As his son, Joel—who has so ably succeeded him in that seat—noted in the chamber today, the one thing that stands out more than anything else about Eric Fitzgibbon was his commitment to his local community and the fact that he could very sincerely say he is one of us.

At that service we heard of some immensely funny moments in Eric's life. We also heard that he was someone not afraid to push forward with often controversial issues, but he always did so with the clear intent of helping better his local community. It was a time we remembered that leading up to his death Éric, unfortunately, suffered from dementia. Like so many people in our community, many of whom will be known only to us in our hearts, it is, in the words of Hazel Hawke and others, a very long goodbye.

I feel terribly sad for the Fitzgibbon family, a very notable clan in their local community. I am sure that the hearts of all of his local community and of this parliament reach out to them at this very difficult time.

Order! In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded. The chair will be resumed at 5.45 pm.

Sitting suspended from 16:46 to 17:45
Canned Hunting

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (17:45): Canned hunting is the practice of intensely breeding and domesticating lions within confined areas in South Africa, in particular, in order to create easy targets for tourist hunters, and I support the member for La Trobe in condemning this practice. It is barbaric killing for macabre trophies. Hunters from all over the world, but notably from the United States, Germany, Spain, France and the UK, go to South Africa and send home lion body parts, such as the head and skin preserved by taxidermists, to show off their supposed prowess. The animals involved are habituated to human contact, often hand reared and bottle-fed, so are no longer naturally fearful of people. Such animals will indeed approach people expecting to get fed but instead receive a bullet or even an arrow from a hunting bow. This makes it easy for clients to be guaranteed a trophy, and thus the industry is lucrative and popular.

There is a spurious argument made that somehow hunting brings conservation funding into a country through hunting permits. Yet this has been shown to be patently false. The steepest declines in lion populations have been in countries with the highest hunting intensity, and it has been shown that the funds reaching the local community are minuscule. Born Free USA, along with the Humane Society International, the Humane Society of the United States and the International Fund for Animal Welfare, commissioned economists at large to investigate the facts. That study, published in June 2013, shows that the trophy-hunting industry makes a minimal contribution to national incomes.

It is an absolute scandal that the continental lion population has fallen from an estimate of over 75,000 as recently as 1980 to around 32,000 in 2012, with a further concern that the numbers could now be as low as 25,000 distributed over only 22 per cent of their historical range. This demonstrates that African lions require increased international protection from all threats including over utilisation for commercial or trophy hunting. Between 1999 and 2008 offtake for recreational purposes was unsustainable by any standard in at least 16 of the 20 range states trading in wild source lion parts.

An Australia Institute report has shown that the economic impact of an Australian restriction on the import of African lion trophies would be minimal because trophy hunting plays a negligible role in African economies, lion hunting is a minor part of the trophy-hunting industry and trophy hunting makes a minimal contribution to rural development. The Australian Institute identifies the trophy-hunting industry as a small part of the African tourism industry. By contrast, the overall tourism industry generates over $13 billion in countries with lions and trophy hunting represents only around two per cent of tourism revenues.

The member for Calare asked in the debate: what can we in Australia do? In response, I support the member for La Trobe's proposal that all animals listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the CITES appendices I, II and III to which Australia is a signatory, are banned from being imported into Australia. I also concur with him that we should change the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act to not only stop imports of canned hunted African lion body parts but also stop all species listed under the CITES Appendix 1, Appendix II and Appendix III from being imported unless specifically approved by the Minister for the Environment.
As the member for La Trobe outlines on his website, video footage of this practice depicts many distressing scenes including one of a lion lying on the ground where, at close range, a not-so-skilled or brave hunter takes several shots to kill the lion. The lion does not try to escape as it does not regard the hunter as a threat, due to past positive contact with humans. This cruel and barbaric activity needs to be stopped and a change in the law, preventing the importation of animal trophies resulting from canned hunts, will help achieve this while also assisting in protecting the future of international wildlife.

The idea of killing animals for sport is frankly barbaric and medieval but, if people really want to do it, then at least we should have a level playing field. The lions have teeth and claws; so give the hunter an appropriately sized knife and fire up the lions a bit before the contest by not feeding them for a couple of days. That would be fairer.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (17:50): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker Griggs, and I must say it is a pleasure to see you back in Canberra. I know you have much wildlife in your territory. I too rise to join with the member for La Trobe and other members to condemn the act of canned hunting across the world and the importation of such trophies into Australia.

I begin by asking members to imagine an animal which has been taken from its mother at birth and raised by humans—not because there is anything wrong with its mother or because it is in the best interests of the animal; simply because it can be taken and to do so, unfortunately, guarantees a very lucrative international business trade. The animal is then raised in captivity until one day it is taken outside and left to wander aimlessly inside a large fenced enclosure until someone—who has paid up to $50,000 to the person who took this animal from its mother—is allowed to kill it with a shotgun, a handgun or sometimes even a crossbow. This is not something hunters are doing as part of a conservation effort; it is simply so they can guarantee they will be able to go home and put a trophy on their wall. In my mind they cannot really call that hunting. With this in mind, I will highlight that I am not opposed to hunting in its true form and, in particular, hunting for conservation purposes, but I am against this atrocious act of canned hunting.

As my fellow members have stated, canned hunting is where animals are raised in captivity for the purpose of eventually becoming trophy kills for foreigners wanting to mount a lion or other animal on their wall. It is a despicable act of cruelty but one which continues to be allowed in many countries around the world, most notably in South Africa. For example, in South Africa there are about 4,000 wild lions; but what many Australians do not know is that there are many more than double that number in captivity.

The member for La Trobe next to me—and I again applaud him for this motion—has done significant work in his electorate and at the national level to raise awareness of canned hunting and the amount of trophies Australians have been allowed to import under the Australian Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. I again commend him for his efforts. While these trophies have been imported under this act I do, however, highlight that Australians' exportation and—most importantly in this instance—importation of wild fauna and flora is guided by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, or CITES, which Australia joined in 1976 and which 180 countries are a party to. The aim of CITES is to ensure that the international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. This is particularly important for those animals which are endangered.
I would also highlight that canned hunting in countries such as South Africa is predominantly by people from European countries, not Australia. But this does not negate our responsibility to prevent the importation of trophies into our country to ensure we do not inadvertently support this atrocious activity. As the member for La Trobe stated, the number of wildlife trophies and body parts imported into Australia from 2010 to 2014 included over 40 different species, consisting of 93 hunt trophies and 1,027 body parts. Although the concept of canned hunting itself is distressing to many Australians, it is also the less blatant cruelty that takes place to these animals which Australians need to be aware of, as well as the fraud which is happening right under our noses. These animals are raised in captivity, so for these farm owners to continue their trade—which is worth approximately US$200 million in Africa alone—the animals are regularly crossbred or inbred, leaving them to suffer from such issues as rickets, back problems and eyesight problems.

Australian volunteers are also being conned by these farm owners. As my colleagues have stated, Australian volunteers are spending about $700 per week to travel to South Africa in the belief they are looking after animals such as lion cubs which will be returned to the wild. The reality is they are inadvertently aiding canned hunting, which is illegal in Australia. The member for La Trobe, as I said, has already done much in this space, including working with the Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, to actually ban the importation of rhinoceros body parts. The minister has also now announced that he intends to extend this ban to the importation of lion parts and lion trophies into Australia, an act which I fully support.

On this basis, again, I applaud the member for La Trobe's call for the importation of animals or animal parts which have been killed under these conditions to be banned and the minister's actions to date in seeing these actions are implemented.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (17:55): I begin by commending the member for La Trobe for bringing this matter to the House—a matter that is not often spoken about or widely known in the community until someone draws attention to it. And as others have said, it quite rightly refers to the hunting and killing of wild animals that effectively are already in captivity but are allowed to roam freely within large farms and wildlife reserves. As other members have pointed out, the whole animal, or parts of it, are then displayed as a trophy for the hunter when he goes back to his own place.

I understand from one report that a fee of somewhere between $10,000 and $50,000 can be paid per animal to the conservation park owner for the pleasure and privilege of going out and shooting these defenceless animals. As the member for Wills pointed out earlier on, we have seen a dramatic drop in lion numbers—I want to talk a bit more about that if time permits.

I also understand that this is becoming a growing business within Africa. In South Africa there are already some 160 farms already up and running and raising animals for these very purposes, often drawing support from genuine volunteers who believe the animals are being raised to try and increase the numbers of particular animals and not for the purpose of later having them hunted.

Between 2001 and 2006, the figures show that 1,830 lion trophies were exported from South Africa—I use lions, because they are probably the predominant animal that seems to be the focus of the discussion. In the next five years, from 2006 to 2011, the numbers skyrocketed to 4,062 parts exported. This is the number that is known to the government. I have no doubt that there would be cases of animals being hunted, a fee being paid and it all...
being done underhand, and the figures are never recorded, and the animals are shipped off to a country that perhaps is not a signatory to any of the protective measures that are in place. Or they deal with the animal through the black market for which I understand, particularly in Asian countries, there is a huge demand, not just for the display of the trophies but in fact as a food source. The animals supposedly have special qualities which make them very attractive to certain cultures.

The fact of the matter is that it is a growing practice and, whilst the farmers of these conservation zoos would quite often argue that in one sense by doing this they are protecting the animals in the wild, the figures point to a different picture. In fact, since canned hunting has come into play, the number of lions running freely has also dropped, so it is doing nothing to protect the true wildlife of the country at all. Indeed, it puts a higher bounty on the wildlife outside of the conservation areas because, as they become scarcer in number, their value also goes up. Figures of up to $100,000 per lion are now charged for the pleasure of killing a lion that is truly in the wild.

Whilst here in Australia we are signatories to the CITES convention and we do what we can, the truth of the matter is that even in Australia we have, I believe, limited statistics available to us as to what is happening. I tried to go through the statistics that the Parliamentary Library provided for us, but it was clear that even then we were not getting a true picture of what may or may not be happening with respect to these animals in Africa.

This goes to the heart of another bigger and more serious matter; that is, the permanent loss of wildlife, fauna and flora that is occurring as a result of human activity right around the world. While we are dealing with one particular aspect of it, the reality is that wildlife is here for a purpose.

I understand that last year Australia hosted the World Parks Congress here in Sydney. Thomas Freedman, in an article, made it clear that the earth's natural environment is worth saving and the protected forests, national parks and marine sanctuaries are the 'basic life support systems that provide the clean air and water, food, fisheries, recreation, stable temperatures and natural coastal protections that sustain us humans'. They were his words, not mine, but he is absolutely right. The animals being treated this way in conservation parks are just part of the big picture of destruction occurring right now throughout the world. Whatever we can do to stop it we should.

Debate adjourned.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Debate resumed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): The question is:

That grievances be noted.

Queensland State Government

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (18:00): I am aggrieved as a Queenslander at what Campbell Newman and the LNP government have done to my beloved home state. In 2012 the then Labor government was reduced to just seven seats. Political commentators joined the LNP in proclaiming that Labor in Queensland was dead, in light of the worst defeat of any major political party in Australia's electoral history.
After two successful by-elections in Stafford and Redcliffe, Labor still had a David-and-Goliath battle against a cashed-up LNP government that had all the advantages of incumbency, which still had over 70 seats, despite some parliamentary defections. As we know, on Saturday 31 January 2015 the Queensland branch of the Australian Labor Party achieved one of the greatest political comebacks in Australia's electoral history. With a swing of 10.9 per cent the Labor Party won back 35 seats, bringing the Labor Party in the Queensland parliament to a total of 44 seats—one shy of being able to form government in its own right. I commend Annastacia Palaszczuk, the opposition leader in Queensland, Premier elect, and her parliamentary colleagues for the great work they have done and for their electoral success.

Political commentators and numerous deposed LNP members agree that the people of Queensland were angry with Campbell Newman's government and its harsh, unfair agenda that involved mass sackings, funding cuts and asset sales. Campbell Newman spent almost three years saying that money was tight but then wasted $2.6 billion on a Taj Mahal—a new executive building in Brisbane's CBD.

He managed to pork barrel his own seat—$18.5 million—for a strong local plant, three times the amount of any neighbouring electorates. Then he had the hide to come out to Ipswich, to my electorate of Blair, and promise $1.5 million for a criterium track for the cycling community of Ipswich—but only if electors re-elected his government and only if the Ipswich LNP member was re-elected.

I commend respected local journalist Joel Gould of The Queensland Times for calling out Campbell Newman for this political blackmail. This happened not just in Ipswich but elsewhere as well. In the neighbouring electorate of Ipswich West, Campbell Newman promised $100,000 for shade sales for the North Ipswich Reserve football grounds, but only if the LNP member for Ipswich West was re-elected. This story went all around the state. This smacks of Bjelke Peterson's tin-pot dictatorship. This is what happened all the time throughout Queensland. We saw this in provincial newspapers and on websites everywhere: LNP members were only guaranteeing for their community if they were re-elected. They would only govern for their own, the LNP in Queensland, not for all Queenslanders.

Campbell Newman told voters in the 2012 election that he had a plan for economic growth that did not rely on asset sales. After the election he claimed that he had no choice, because he wanted to privatise assets. He went around the countryside saying that these were not asset sales. These were weasel words. The day before the election, in a debate with Annastacia Palaszczuk, he admitted they were asset sales.

He promised in 2012 that he had a plan for a four per cent unemployment rate in Queensland that did not rely on asset sales. He lied. He said government workers would have nothing to fear from the LNP government in Queensland if he was elected in 2012. He lied again. Then he sacked 24,000 of them, including 4,800 health and hospital workers—which included 1,800 nurses and midwives. I can tell Campbell Newman and all those people here that, on election day at the three big polling booths in Ipswich and Ipswich West where I was, there was not one person in a nurse's uniform or a health worker's uniform that did not take a Labor Party how-to-vote card. And I was there all day at those booths.

Unemployment was supposed to reduce to four per cent. It was 5.5 per cent when Campbell Newman and the LNP government came to power. It is over six per cent. In
Ipswich it is 8.9 per cent; and, in many suburbs in Ipswich, youth unemployment rates are over 20 per cent. That is what happened. That is what happens when you sack workers and you sack health workers and public servants. You cut the funding.

Regarding education funding cuts in Queensland, a Queensland kid in primary school now gets $165 less under the Campbell Newman government than they got when the previous Labor government was in power. A high-school child gets $203 less. If you happen to go to high school or primary school and you have a disability, in Queensland now, under the Campbell Newman government, you get $1,770 less than when they came to power back in 2012.

You do not sack people, you do not cut funding, you do not have 240,000 people on the waiting list to get into hospital for surgery and then expect people to go and vote for you. That is the arrogance of the appalling government that we had in Queensland. That is why I am aggrieved at what they did. They claim they were cutting debt and deficit, but guess what? It went up $15 billion under them—$15 billion higher—because they had their priorities wrong. It was the same old Liberals, and now it is in Queensland. Wrong values. Wrong ethics. Wrong morals. That is the problem they had because they got their priorities wrong. They went about cutting and pillaging and sacking.

Family Planning Queensland lost $700,000. Community groups in my electorate and elsewhere lost money. Funding for services given to councils was slashed. For example, the Ipswich City Council Community and Cultural Service Department was slashed. The funding for the councils around South-East Queensland was slashed. I could not get over it, because Campbell Newman was the former Mayor of Brisbane. He went out there, slashing funding for councils which give front-line services to people in their communities, and the government claimed it was all about cutting red tape and bureaucracy. The people of Queensland woke up to them. The Newman government said that they would not do this, and then they went and did so.

This is a reminder to the current Abbott government. They said they would be a government of no excuses. As happened in Queensland, I expect at the next federal election the people of Australia will recall the fact that the Abbott government broke promises on education, on health, on the GST, on the ABC, on SBS and on pensions. They will recall that at the next federal election, and there are plenty of marginal seat holders who did not vote for the Prime Minister this morning who might remember it as well. Take the Prime Minister's statement this morning: he said only the voters can get rid of him. When did we elect a president here in Australia! We have a Westminster parliamentary democracy. It was a dig at all those people who did not vote for him this morning. The LNP members in Queensland who voted today in the party room know the electoral consequences, because Labor won state seats from Bundaberg to the Torres Strait. At present, my electorate is the most northerly Queensland Labor seat federally—Ipswich and up through the Somerset region. But, up the coast, there are now state Labor seats held all the way. That is why the Queensland LNP members were so outspoken; they saw what happened on 31 January.

But what happened during the Queensland LNP tenure? What happened there? Not a peep from federal LNP members in relation to the slashing of funding in Townsville hospitals and hospitals in Cairns and Mackay and elsewhere. Funding for their schools was slashed as well. They did not defend their communities. They sat by, mute, while Campbell Newman and a
Brisbane-centric government failed to look after regional Queensland. It is no surprise, by the way, that in Moreton Bay, Ipswich, Logan and right up the Queensland coast the Queensland public took retribution for what the Newman government did to them and their communities. It is a message to a Prime Minister who says he has ‘good government’ from today. I wonder what he thought about his government since September 2013, if he says that good government starts today! What type of government has he delivered to the people of Australia if he thinks that good government starts today? Good government has not been operating since September 2013. They have broken promise after promise and they will go the way of the Queensland LNP government.

Campbell Newman lost his seat because of what happened; the people of Ashgrove turfed him out unceremoniously. I want to congratulate local member, Jennifer Howard, who won her seat in Ipswich, Councillor Jim Madden, who won Ipswich West and Jo-Ann Miller, who won her seat. And I congratulate Steve Leese and Liz Hollens-Riley, candidates in Lockyer and Nanango for their fine efforts in the campaign.

**Competition Policy**

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (18:10): Before I go on to my contribution in the grievance debate: that contribution by the member for Blair shows everything that is wrong with politics in this country and the threat and danger that we have to our prosperity going forward. He cannot come into this House and whinge and whine and mope about cuts here and cuts there when the member for Blair and his cohorts are responsible for creating the debt and deficit mess that we have in this country!

What needs to be remembered is that the Commonwealth interest bill on Labor’s debt is $560 for every man, woman and child in the country, every year forever until we start paying that off. For the average family of four that is over $2,000 a year which whoever is in government has to find to pay just the interest on Labor’s debt. This is the problem we have: we have to work together as a parliament to try to say, ‘How are we going to get the budget back in order?’ rather than coming in here and making these pathetic whinges about cuts.

The particular issue I wish to speak about this afternoon is something that I have raised several times in this parliament—many times since I was first elected—and that is the damage that is being done to our economy and our prosperity because we have an overly concentrated retail market and the failings of our competition policy to address that.

Nowhere in the world, other than in the old Eastern bloc countries, has a retail sector as concentrated as we do here in Australia. There is a famous picture—I am sure you would be aware of it, Deputy Speaker—taken in a supermarket in the US back in 1989. It was Boris Yeltsin’s first trip to America. He was a member of the supreme Soviet. He had actually gone to a place in Houston and he did a detour, just at random, to check one of the local supermarkets. They said that he actually wandered around this supermarket—it was called Randall’s supermarket—in absolute amazement at the goods that were available to the average consumer in America. Quoted from his biography, ‘When I saw those shelves crammed with hundreds of thousands of cans, cartons and goods of every possible sort, for the first time in my life I felt quite frankly sick with despair for the Soviet people; that such a potentially super-rich country as ours has been brought to a state of poverty is a terrible thing.’
The reason the Soviet economy failed in something as basic as the production of food and groceries was because their market was overly concentrated. They did not have the innovation bringing out the new ideas, trying new business models and creating the new products that the West did. That is why the old Eastern bloc countries failed. The more diversity we can have in the market—the more players out there, bringing new ideas to market and trying new ideas and experimenting—that is what drives the economy.

The overconcentration in the Australian retail market is, firstly, not the result of free market forces. It arose because of the restrictive planning and zoning laws that we have in this country, where some council bureaucrat decides where someone can set up a retail shop, or what a retail shop can sell. In my electorate in Hughes, a retailer was actually taken to court and the court produced a list of things that it could not sell! Things such as babies bibs, prams and plastic buckets and bird cages! The court made this absurd decision about it because the local government regulations said, 'You as a retail shop cannot sell these things.' This has caused a massive distortion in our retail market where our major retailers basically get off paying a very subsidised rent that is subsidised by the smaller retailers of this nation. In any shopping centre in the country it is almost an 80-20 rule, where the smaller retailers occupy 20 per cent of the space but pay 80 per cent of the costs because they have their rent forced up year after year. If they want to go and set up a business outside the shopping centre they cannot, because of the government regulation that ties them in there.

This absolute distortion which I have spoken about was actually detailed last year in a Productivity Commission report on the costs of doing business. It compared the cost of wages, rent, utilities and other costs as a percentage of the total cost of doing business in Australia against costs in the USA and the UK. The rental cost for supermarkets in Australia was actually less because here in Australia that is subsidised, through those artificial zoning requirements, by those smaller retailers. When you come to the speciality retailers, the Productivity Commission found that the occupancy cost of rent for a clothing retailer in Australia is more than double what it is in the USA. We have our smaller retailers—our smaller, independent retailers—actually subsidising our larger retailers. That is why our larger retailers have grown so much in size compared to the smaller retailers in this country. This piles distortion upon distortion.

There was a report by KPMG back in 2013 which looked at the Australian retail sector and the suppliers in the Australian food sector. One thing they noticed—I will quote from the report at page 61—was there was:

… a significant increase in trade spend—

Trade spend is the rebate that a supplier pays back to the retailer such as through trade discounts and promotional allowances—

from 19.5 per cent of gross sales in 2008-09 to 23.4 per cent in 2011-12 without corresponding increase in volumes has had a … negative impact on profitability.

So what happens, because our retail sector is so concentrated, is those larger retailers have got excessive market power that enables them to go back and screw the supply chain. Rather than actually looking to use innovation and efficiencies to increase their profits, those larger retailers simply go back to those suppliers and put the screws on them for bigger rebates and bigger discounts. That is exactly what is recorded in this KPMG report. That is exactly what the ACCC found last year when they filed a case against Coles for unconscionable conduct,
where Coles had actually used their market power to go back to their suppliers—after they had purchased the goods—to squeeze them for extra rebates. Because the market is so concentrated those suppliers simply had no alternative than to cough the money up—millions of dollars. That is money that could have gone into innovation and research. In such a market, what investor is going to put up their capital to produce new goods for the Australian retail sector when they know that they can be—pardon the French—screwed in that way?

And this is not an isolated case. Only last week we heard of another case where one supplier filed a court action against Metcash, claiming it had paid them $10.36 million in rebates on just $40 million worth of sales. They sold them $40 million worth of goods, but they had to pay almost 25 per cent—$10 million—of that money back as a rebate. The biggest cost of doing business for the suppliers is not their wages, their rent or the cost of the goods they get from the farmer but the rebates that they pay.

The detrimental effect this has on our economy goes on and on. This is something we need to address. The reason we need to address it is quite simple. If we look to the future for our nation, we need to be exporting; that is going to be the future. We need to be increasing our exports. We cannot simply rely on our mineral resources.

The biggest area we can increase our exports in is obviously going to be in the high-end food sector in Asia. But, before someone can do that from Australia, they have to be able to set up in Australia, develop their business model and get a product to market. Then, once they get their production and everything right in Australia, they can tackle the export market. I know because I speak from experience in this area. That is why, if our retail market remains overly concentrated in the way it is, it will deter innovation and investment, and it will be bad for the prosperity of our nation going forward. This is why our report into the competition policy in this country is so critical, and I look forward to seeing that report in the coming weeks.

**Shortland Electorate: Budget**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (18:20): It is with a heavy heart that I stand here today to speak in this grievance debate because you may not be aware of it, but the people that I represent in this parliament are really upset with this government. The Abbott government has inflicted such pain and hurt on the people that I represent.

Government members interjecting—

My office is inundated with calls from my constituents complaining about the Abbott government.

A government member: Did you tell them how much the interest payments are in the red?

Ms HALL: I would like to say that members of the government are totally out of touch with their constituents if they do not understand that. I was out doorknocking with a state candidate on Saturday and I can say that there was not a single person who gave a vote of approval to the performance of the Liberal coalition government here in Canberra.

This pain and hurt has been inflicted in a number of areas—education, the $100,000 degrees that we are all hearing about. The form is taking place there. Attacks on pensioners—Shortland is an electorate with a lot of elderly people in it, and those pensioners are very upset with the Abbott government. Families—the attacks on workers and their wages and
conditions. These are all things that are really impacting on people; the voters of the Shortland electorate.

I would really like to emphasise the changes to Medicare. The changes and the surcharge are absolute madness! It has united the whole community. It has united the doctors, the patients and health workers. Everybody is up in arms about the proposals that this government has brought forward to attack health in our community. Medicare has meant that all Australians have access to health care when they need it. Medicare ensures that if you are sick you can see a doctor and you can afford it. But the changes that are being put forward by the Abbott government—and they still have not walked away from them—will really hurt people.

I met with a new group in my electorate last Friday, the Hunter General Practitioners Association. You are not going to believe this—the Abbott government has forced the doctors of Australia and the Hunter to join together, because they want to be an independent voice for GPs. They want to provide professional exchange amongst their members, but first and foremost they want to fight the changes that are being put forward by the Abbott government, changes they know are going to impact really badly on their patients. The fact that there was no consultation was one of the things they highlighted in our discussion—and the lack of seeking their suggestions about what they could do to help lower health costs. They actually have some ideas that I think are worthwhile considering they have come together to promote primary health care and a collaborative approach between all sectors. That is government, doctors and their patients. Good policy is formed by everybody forming partnerships and working together, not by a government unilaterally imposing on people what they believe is good for them.

The Prime Minister was Minister for Health and Ageing in the Howard government, and I remember how he used to stand up in parliament and say, 'I'm the best friend that Medicare ever had.' As he said it, he just smirked. He was showing his disdain for the Australian people and disdain for Medicare as he constantly undermined it. When he was health minister 60 per cent of the services in the Shortland electorate were bulk billed. Now it is 82 per cent. That is because of the policies that have been put in place. When the Prime Minister was health minister, every time figures were released, the number of doctors bulk billing went down. It shows that he really never has had that commitment to health.

When he was health minister the health and ageing committee at the time brought down a report—The blame game: report on the inquiry into health funding—looking at trying to solve one of the biggest problems that exists in health: the cost shifting between the state and the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, the good work that was done on that committee was ignored.

The general practice association in the Hunter pointed out that they developed a strong relationship with their patients over a long period of time. Sometimes it is even intergenerational. They say that we have one of the best healthcare systems in the world and there is equitable access to that health system. I think members on the other side would probably agree with that. I think my colleagues on the health committee would know that people can get equitable access to high-quality health care. The doctors say: 'We believe that the proposed co-payment and MBS indexation freeze should not be implemented. These proposals could place barriers to health care between patients and their GPs and represent a divestment in primary care. Both of these outcomes are undesirable.'
These are not statements that are made at a union meeting. These are not statements made at the pension association meeting. Rather, this is a statement made by doctors who care for patients and who are not radical in any way. Their only care—their only motivation—is to ensure that their patients obtain good access to health care.

They even came up with some ideas for saving. They looked at reducing the costs for pharmaceuticals and had a couple of suggestions in that area; reducing the cost of investigations, in which they highlighted radiography and investigations that were undertaken there; stabilising the cost of specialist care; and reviewing disease management Medicare items. So there are a number of areas where, if the government were truly serious about looking at reducing health costs, they could have moved, but instead they were driven by their ideology and immediately decided, 'We've got to make people pay to get access to health care.'

I do not think that is the answer. I think that, if you compare our health system in Australia to the health system in the UK, the US and countries throughout the world, we have one of the lowest cost structures.

In addition to that, the government's claim that health costs are increasing is fallacious because they have actually decreased in recent times. What we have before us is an assault on our healthcare system. What we have before us is an assault on Medicare. That assault is being driven by ideology. It is being driven by a Prime Minister that has no commitment whatsoever to Medicare, a Prime Minister who has runs on the board and has a history in that area. We have had a new health minister appointed, but it is still the same government; it is still the same policy; it is still the same ideology. The government is still going to have the same agenda, and that agenda is to push the costs for health onto patients, onto Australians, and to make sure that we move away from universal health care, from a system that ensures every person can get access to health care when they need it. (Time expired)

Baseball

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (18:30): I step up to the plate to talk about baseball and about the international opportunities that baseball offers Australia based in my electorate of Hasluck. Baseball is not just a sport; it is an international industry, and Australia is ready to step up to the plate. On the weekend 'Perth claim second consecutive shield' was the title of a story done by Nina Zimmerman:

ADELAIDE, 8 February - For the fourth time in five years, Perth reign supreme atop the pedestal of the Australian Baseball League. The Alcohol. Think Again Perth Heat beat the Adelaide Bite, proudly presented by SA Power Networks, 12-5 in Sunday's third and final game of the ABL Championship Series presented by ConocoPhillips, to take home the Claxton Shield for the second consecutive season.

The series victory had historical implications beyond Perth taking home its fourth title in the five-year existence of the new ABL. With the win, Western Australia moved into a second-place tie with South Australia on the all-time Claxton Shield premiership list. The victory also came one night after Perth leveled the championship series with a tenth-inning win.

"We're a bunch of fighters," Tim Kennelly said. "We've done that for years, so it was good to bounce back with that win."

But what is fascinating is that the media coverage of baseball, which is a growing sport in Australia, is very limited. If it had the same coverage as AFL or test matches, or some of the other sports, then its place within the Australian sporting arena would be as significant as that
held by cricket in particular. And I hope that in the future baseball holds its place. It is also interesting that Australia has played in five significant Asian baseball cups. We were semi-finalists in 1971, 1975 and 1985. At Beijing in China we were a semi-finalist in 1991, and then again in 1993. But, again, the media coverage has not been tremendous.

I will start with some history and move on to some good old-fashioned bragging with plenty of baseball references throughout. Baseball took off on Australia’s east coast and is believed to have been brought over by Americans during the Victorian gold rush in the 1850s. Miners would play baseball on the flat and dusty goldfields on their rest days. Still in goldfield country, the first reported organised teams were in Ballarat, Victoria, in 1857. While baseball is a summer sport in the USA, it was originally considered a useful off-season sport for Australian cricketers and was played during winter, including all the way through the First World War.

The Australian Baseball League, or the ABL, now plays in summer so the players can move between leagues in the Northern Hemisphere and in Australia. We have outstanding competitors who make the grade in the States and in the Asian circuit in Korea. When you are watching them when they are back, you notice the difference. And yet they are not seen in the media as heroes in their own right or given the coverage that we give prominent and eminent players in the two principal sports that we play in this nation.

Now I want to move to the West Australian coast, and the bragging. On Saturday, the Western Australian baseball team, the Perth Heat, defeated the South Australian team, the Adelaide Bite, to win the ABL championships for the fourth time in five seasons. That is an incredible feat for a state team to have taken for the fourth time. I know the competitors on the east coast were hoping that they would not win the series and that it would be taken by Adelaide. That is right, the Heat beat the Bite, making Perth the hottest Aussie baseball team as well as the hottest capital city.

As well as having the best baseball team in Australia, Perth also has the best baseball stadium in Australia. Perth Heat are based at Barbagallo Ballpark in my electorate of Hasluck. Barbagallo Ballpark was built in 2004 and expanded in 2007. It is based in the suburb of Thornlie in the south of Perth. It has a seating capacity of about 500 punters and standing room for 3,500 more. The ballpark has an enclosed members area, numbered seats and the best quality playing surface of any park in the nation. But it could be better. The Commonwealth and state governments have before them a proposal to turn Barbagallo Ballpark into a world-class stadium capable of hosting international events. Upgrading Barbagallo Ballpark is something I am fighting for in Hasluck in 2015. It would be a whole new ball game for Australia.

Let me talk you through the journey that would get us there. The pitch comes from Baseball WA, the organisation that runs the stadium and supports the successful Perth Heat. Baseball WA is a good pitcher and they put forward a good proposal. If the Commonwealth and state governments swing at this pitch we will get to first base, increasing the capacity of the stadium, the lighting and the quality of the field and the amenities at Barbagallo Ballpark. From there we would be able to make our way to second base, getting international teams from the big baseball countries like Japan, China, Korea and others in the world to play games in Australia. As the saying goes, if you build it, they will come. Along with them will come a stream of revenue-raising opportunities, including employment, sponsorship and international
tourism. If Australia is getting the big teams in then we are getting the big crowds in. We will be well on the way to third base, which is the incredible health benefit of involving more Australians in sport, especially our kids.

One of the things I love about attending baseball games is the tradition of inviting all children who are at the park to run across the field at the beginning of the ninth inning. When I watched the semifinal match at Barbagallo in January, hundreds of children crossed the oval to the tune of *Who Let The Dogs Out*. I saw kids with a variety of fitness levels give their all to get across the 200-metre field. Not all these kids attending are spectators. They are encouraged to test out their own fitness and have a great time doing it.

This does not come out of left field on my part. Baseball is the fastest growing junior sport in Australia and it is one of the fastest growing sports across the board. Internationally, Australia is building a reputation as a heavy hitter. Over 360 Australian players have signed major league contracts overseas, not to mention those employed in the lucrative and highly regarded profession of umpiring. My colleague Steve Irons, the member from the neighbouring electorate of Swan and the chairman of the Parliamentary Friends of Sport, expressed his support for the Barbagallo Ballpark project in the chamber in June last year. With a modest investment from the Commonwealth, there is potential for a home run here, and I would say to the Minister for Health and Sport, the Hon. Sussan Ley, and to the state Minister for Sport and Recreation, Mia Davies, 'Batter up! Let's hit this one out of the park and leave a lasting legacy for Australia's sporting future.'

In finishing, I want to say that, given all the excitement of baseball and the hype and our players' success overseas, we get very little media coverage. I do not see channels 10, 9 or 7 covering the games that it has brought into the homes of families. It is certainly telecast to some 50 other countries who watch the game and enjoy it. What I hope to see in the future is that we have the type of coverage that will build the sport, encourage children out on the grounds and increase their level of fitness. It would be great to get the member opposite out there on the field and I would be quite happy to have the Hasluck Hitters take on your electorate in a pre-season game. But, seriously, the media needs to give this game the coverage it deserves because international competitors in any other sport are highly sought after. They play two seasons, one in our own country and one overseas.

I see the young people who take the pathway out of primary school, where they play tee-ball and softball, and move on to baseball. Some of the sporting scholarships I have awarded have been to young people who aspire to play for the Yankees and the Dodgers, or Korea because they see an opportunity to extend their capabilities and skills outside the country. I hope that the Australian media will pick up on the value and the importance of the game, and promote it in a way that encourages broader viewing. It would have been great to have watched the Perth Heat beat the Adelaide Bite live on commercial television. It was their fourth consecutive finals win out of five and it would have been fantastic to see it celebrated in that way.

**Hunter Region: Economy**

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (18:40): I applaud the member for Hasluck's commitment to baseball and kid's health in general. It is lovely to see that. There is no higher place accorded in the political pantheon than to those leaders who have created jobs and reshaped their economies for the better. Alongside national defence, there is no higher obligation on a
government than to support and promote the employment prospects of its citizens. That is why FDR's 'new deal' and John Curtin's white paper on full employment stand as some of the greatest achievements in politics.

Last week, the Prime Minister sought to reboot the government's agenda in a desperate attempt to convince his colleagues that he is the right man for the top job. While he only succeeded in winning a temporary stay of execution, I have some helpful advice for the embattled Prime Minister. If you genuinely want to reboot, you should start by outlining a plan for jobs and employment. If you really want to change, Prime Minister, start with your approach to higher education, science, research, innovation and industry, and adopt a responsible approach to the challenges facing our economy and our environment. If you want a place to start, Prime Minister, do it in the Hunter.

The Hunter is the largest regional economy in Australia. We have a diverse mix of resources, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, defence, energy and service sectors. The port of Newcastle is the largest coal export port in the world and mining is a fundamentally important part of the region's economy and will be for some time to come. I am proud of that role. We are also a region built on manufacturing. Our landscape is dotted with towns born from an industrial giant, the source of employment and livelihood for generations.

It is no secret that mining and manufacturing sectors, including those of the Hunter, face significant issues. In many ways, our region is reflective of the national economy and so too the strength and challenges we face concern our nation as a whole. It is also no secret that the Hunter is a resilient region. We have survived the transition from being reliant on BHP to becoming a diverse economy, and we have done this on the back of our ability to innovate and collaborate. Organisations such as Hunternet, the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources, CSIRO, HMRI, the Slingshot program and the University of Newcastle play an important part in connecting businesses and industries, an approach proven to foster innovation and technical progress.

We know that when businesses and academics embrace innovation as part of their core strategy and when government policies maximise their opportunity to do so, wonderful things can happen. As our economy undergoes major structural change, the future success of many Australian industries will rely heavily upon their ability to innovate. Those who develop new ideas and integrate new technologies and employ modern competitive ways of doing business will be out in front.

Regional Development Australia Hunter is a key body working in our area to progress our regional economic priorities. The Hunter Innovation Scorecard initiative, now in its second year, is a unique measure of the region's commitment to innovation and promotes our capabilities in research, education and industry. This year the region was benchmarked not just against Australian regions but against the 190 regions in the European Union. The results demonstrate that we are right to be proud of our region's economy and the players within it. The Hunter ranked 70th for introducing new or significantly improved methods and processes, 72nd for introducing marketing or organisational innovations, 25th for innovative businesses collaborating with others and 37th for businesses innovating in-house. The Hunter is the only regional area in the country to measure its capacity to innovate in this way and RDA Hunter should be commended for this achievement. I am less complimentary, however,
towards the contribution of the minister for regional development and Deputy Prime Minister, who writes in this year's scorecard:

I also strongly believe that regions which are prepared to innovate and try bold, but well thought through, approaches to difficult challenges will 'make their own luck' into the future.

Let us be clear: instead of saying innovative businesses are making their own luck, the Deputy Prime Minister should admit that their success is now likely to be in spite of, rather than a result of, the federal government's investment in innovation and industry policy. His government's actions demonstrate that they have left industry on its own to compete against the rest of the world.

Labor believes that our future competitiveness lies in the skills and ingenuity of people. Under the previous government we put in place policies to stimulate entrepreneurship and foster innovation, but this government is actively working against this cause and the results could not be more dire. The Abbott government has abandoned Labor's 10-year innovation strategy and has slashed more than $3 billion in funding from science, research, innovation and industry. They have scrapped numerous innovation and research programs including Enterprise Connect, Commercialisation Australia, industry innovation precincts, the Enterprise Solutions Program, the Innovation Investment Fund and the Australian Industry Participation Plan. We also saw the Prime Minister kill the automotive industry and the 250,000 jobs that rely upon it. Worst of all for the Hunter, the government has abandoned Labor's $1 billion plan for Australian jobs. Under our plan, $500 million was provided to established innovation precincts to enable government, industry and research organisations to collaborate. These precincts—or clusters by another name—will build on the world-class examples we see overseas of how to foster collaboration and thereby competitiveness in your local economy.

I make no secret of my belief that the Hunter would have been extremely well placed to established an innovation precinct and, while I am disappointed that the government has replaced the program with an inferior scheme and slashed the funding available, I believe an opportunity remains for the region to be considered under the government's Industry Growth Centres Initiative. There is nowhere more suited to host a mining, energy or manufacturing centre than the Hunter region, and I call on the government to establish an industry growth centre in the Hunter.

Why am I focusing on this? It is because we must support as many Australians as possible to obtain jobs. Unemployment is a cancer that eats away at communities and families. In my first speech in this place I talked about the impact prolonged unemployment can have on families and I included a personal example. Full employment must be a fundamental objective of government and policies must be established to support this objective. I am proud that during the last Labor government close to one million jobs were created in Australia. It is a truly remarkable figure given that this period was a period in which the world the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. It is worth noting that before the last election the current Prime Minister promised his government would create one million jobs in five years; however, in September 2013, the unemployment rate was 5.6 per cent. Today it is 6.1 per cent and heading further up, and we have already seen the RBA forced to reduce interest rates to emergency lows to combat this high and rising unemployment. In the Hunter region the statistics are even more grim. The Hunter Research Foundation has found that the current
unemployment rate is around eight per cent—the highest for over a decade—and it has almost doubled since late 2013. Let me repeat that: under this right-wing, neoliberal Liberal government, unemployment in the Hunter region has almost doubled in the financial year 2013-2014 over 2,200 workers lost their jobs in the Hunter. That is 2,200 families across our region whose lives have been shattered by this devastating news. The *Newcastle Herald* reported just last week that coal production jobs have fallen below 20,000 for the first time since 2010. And, because of this government's refusal to support Australian jobs and allow Australian companies to bid for contracts to build naval supply ships locally, and their tardiness in bringing forward work to combat the shipbuilding 'valley of death', over 900 jobs will be lost at the Forgacs shipyard imminently.

That is why we need an urgent review of innovation and industry policies in this country. Sophisticated economic theory recognises the strong and sophisticated role that government has in promoting employment. We do not have time for economic flat-earthers who spout out-of-date economic theories that have been discredited in the broader economy. It is time that this government embraced this more modern economic theory.

In his rallying of the troops last week, the Prime Minister referred to sunset and sunrise industries. He effectively boasted of destroying the car industry. But the truth is that this government has set the sun on so many industries and, through its policy idiocy, has stopped the rise of so many others. The Hunter region can thrive but, without the necessary investment in its culture of innovation, it will wither and die. Should the Prime Minister wish to send a genuine signal to the people of Australia that he has listened and heard the issues that are important to them, he must address his shameful record on jobs and industry, and I call on him to start with the Hunter.

I started by applauding FDR and I will finish with a quote from him on the importance of this task:

> Not only our future economic soundness but the very soundness of our democratic institutions depends on the determination of our Government to give employment to idle men.

No truer words were ever spoken. Thank you. *(Time expired)*

**Fuel Prices**

*Mrs GRIGGS* (Solomon) *(18:50)*: I rise to voice the anger and the concern of not only the people in my electorate but indeed all Territorians about the fuel pricing that we have today in the Territory. Territorians have paid much more at the fuel bowser than in any capital city, but in recent years the gap between prices in Darwin and prices in other cities has widened dramatically. With almost any product, a retailer who charges too much will find that the consumer stops buying. However, petrol is a notable exception because petrol is a necessity. When petrol prices rise, families still need to drive their children to schools and sports, they need to drive their cars to work; taxi drivers still need to fill their tanks with petrol; and, even if the cost of diesel goes up, courier and truck drivers still need to operate.

It is not unusual in my electorate of Solomon for a person living in Palmerston to commute to Darwin for work each day. That is roughly a 50-kilometre round-trip a day, five days a week. Add into the mix a social outing or two, grocery shopping and taking the kids to sport, and it is very easy for people in my electorate to go through one tank or possibly two tanks of...
fuel a week. It is for this reason that the people in the Top End are particularly angry that they are paying up to 30c more for a litre of fuel than in other parts of the country.

On Friday last week, 6 February, unleaded fuel in Sydney was 97.5c a litre. However, in Darwin, the cheapest fuel available was 126.9c a litre. So last Friday, on average, Darwin motorists were paying 128.9c, whereas in Sydney the figure was just 115.3c. Diesel in Darwin costs, on average, 131.3c a litre, but Sydney motorists can fill up for 119.6c.

We acknowledge that petrol pricing is not a simple issue and that the value of the Australian dollar, the price of crude oil, overseas supply-and-demand issues as well as taxation are all factors that contribute to the price that customers are paying at the bowser. These factors apply to everyone everywhere. However, one factor that has a considerable influence on price but varies from place to place is competition. As I said, last week, Sydney and Adelaide motorists enjoyed a discounting war between retailers, driving the cost of unleaded fuel below the wholesale terminal gate price. In Melbourne and Brisbane, the retail margins were less than 2c per litre, but my constituents in Solomon were paying, in some cases, 12 times more for every single litre of fuel. Retail prices topped wholesale prices by 24c for every litre. That is not really good enough.

My colleague the Northern Territory Chief Minister, Adam Giles, described this situation recently with a crude but effective metaphor involving a pineapple, but I do not think I will use that here today. I honestly cannot think of a better way to describe it. But the treatment of Territorians by the fuel retailers is just not good enough.

In the recent by-election in the Northern Territory's seat of Casuarina, this issue was brought very effectively to a head by the Country Liberals candidate, Dr Harry Kypreos. A sustained campaign by the Country Liberals, followed by a pricing summit that was convened by the Northern Territory government, brought some relief to motorists, with prices dropping significantly. However, the drop has not been sustained, and Territorians continue to pay more at the bowser relative to the rest of the country, as I said. Terminal gate prices in Darwin have differed from the national average by 3c to 4c over the last year, yet retail prices in Darwin were on average 21.6c per litre higher than the national capital city average. There is no reasonable explanation for that difference.

Last year, the coalition government took steps in the right direction on this issue, and our good friend the small business minister, Bruce Billson, ordered the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to monitor price costs and profits and report quarterly. As the elected representative of the people of Solomon I think Minister Billson and look forward to the results of that investigation. Given the massive disparity in fuel prices between the mainland capitals and the electorate of Solomon, I have written to the ACCC and requested, on behalf of my constituents, that the ACCC single out Darwin and Palmerston for special, detailed investigations.

As the hardworking member the Dobell—another good friend of ours, Deputy Speaker Hawke—has done, I have launched an online petition on my website. The website is natashagriggs.com.au. The purpose of the petition is to gather the support of the community so that we can fight to get reduced petrol prices at the bowser. I place on record my thanks to the hardworking member for Dobell for sharing her experiences in her fight for reduced petrol prices in regional New South Wales. I thank the federal minister for his interest in and support on this particular issue in the Northern Territory. I thank my colleagues in the Giles Northern
Territorians have paid far too much for far too long. With community support—by signing my petition—and through not only my advocacy but also that of the Northern Territory government and Minister Bruce Billson, I am confident that, if we have enough buy-in from the community, we will be successful in securing a petrol price monitoring site in the Northern Territory. So I encourage all Territorians to sign my petition. Let's fight for cheaper fuel in the Territory together—because I cannot do it alone; I do need the community to help me. I have already got help from Minister Billson. He has given the ACCC extra powers. I want the ACCC to use those powers and set up a monitoring site in the Northern Territory, because we want cheaper fuel and we deserve cheaper fuel.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke): The time allotted for this debate has expired.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:00
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Department of the Treasury: Staff Redundancy
(Question No. 273)

Dr Leigh asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 26 August 2014:

(1) What total number of Treasury staff were made involuntarily redundant as a result of the "spill and fill" process conducted in July and August 2014.

(2) Were any of the staff deemed excess to his department's requirements (a) on maternity leave or other forms of approved departmental leave at the time of being made involuntarily redundant, if so, how many; and (b) graduate employees who had joined The Treasury in 2014, if so, how many.

(3) What is the total combined cost of redundancy packages associated with these involuntary redundancies.

Mr Hockey: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) to (3) The majority of staff who were deemed excess as part of Treasury's recent redundancy process, have elected to take up the option of redeployment. While offers of redundancy have been made to these staff, the consideration period for redundancy ran concurrently with the redeployment period, which ran for eight weeks from 25 August 2014. Staff were not required to accept or decline the offer of redundancy until 24 October 2014. As at the time the question was asked, one employee deemed excess had accepted an offer of voluntary redundancy. Given issues of privacy and the potential to identify that individual, it would be inappropriate to provide details of that individual's redundancy package.

Social Services: Building Multicultural Communities Program
(Question No. 277)

Ms Rowland asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 27 August 2014:

(1) Did his department consult with any organisations or individuals before cutting funding for the Building Multicultural Communities Program; if so, (a) which organisations or individuals, (b) on what date were they consulted, and (c) what form did the consultation take; if not, why not.

(2) In respect of the letter referred to on 27 February 2014 by the Deputy Secretary of Families and Communities, which stated that applicants had to return the funding agreement with receipts, (a) can he provide a copy, (b) how many days did applicants have to provide this documentation, and (c) on what date(s) was this letter sent to all applicants.

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) (a) to (c) No. The whole of government review of grant spending was led by the Department of Finance.

(2) (a) See attached Letter of Offer for Stream 1 grants. Available from the House of Representatives Table Office

(b) As above in (2) (a).

(c) Letters were date stamped 5 August 2013 and posted between 20 August 2013 and 27 August 2013.

Communications: Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Special Broadcasting Services
(Question No. 284)

Ms Rowland asked the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 27 August 2014:
When will the (a) Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and (b) Special Broadcasting Services (SBS) Board, vacancies be filled, including the role of Chairman of the SBS which has been vacant since 27 March 2014?

Mr Turnbull: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) Under the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 (ABC Act) and the Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991 (SBS Act), a merit-based appointment process must be followed before the appointment of non-executive Directors, including the Chairperson, to the ABC and SBS Boards by the Governor-General.

(2) Under section 24F of the ABC Act, the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet appoints a four person independent nomination panel to assess potential candidates for the ABC and SBS Boards against the selection criteria on the basis of merit.

(3) Under section 24B of the ABC Act and section 43 of the SBS Act, the Panel conducts the assessment process for ABC and SBS Board vacancies and then provides a written report to the Minister for Communications on the outcome of the process and a recommendation of at least three candidates per vacancy (in the case of the ABC Chairperson this report is given to the Prime Minister).

(4) For the current vacancies (one ABC non-executive director, the SBS Chairperson and one SBS non-executive director), the Panel has conducted the selection process and provided its written report to the Minister for Communications.

(5) The Government is currently considering the report's recommendations and will finalise the appointments to the ABC and SBS Boards in due course.

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Hospitality

May 2014:

Mr Conroy asked the Prime Minister in writing, on 3 September 2014:

In respect of hospitality since 7 September 2013, has the Minister's department paid for any function to introduce to the department (a) the Minister, (b) the Minister's staff, and where applicable, each (c) junior Minister (including Assistant Ministers), (d) junior (and Assistant) Minister's staff, (e) Parliamentary Secretary, and (f) Parliamentary Secretary's staff; if so, at what cost.

Mr Abbott: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Unlike the former government, the Prime Minister believes it is important to thank officials in his Department for their hard work, particularly given the tumultuous final year of the former government when they served three different Prime Ministers.

Department of Human Services: Secondments

(September 2014):

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 3 September 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 (a) how many departmental officials have been seconded to the; (i) Minister's office, and where applicable, each; (ii) junior Minister's office (including Assistant Ministers); and (iii) Parliamentary Secretary's office; (b) for how long; and (c) at what level.

Mr Andrews: The Minister for Human Services, has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

Since September 2013 the Department of Human Services has provided two Departmental Liaison Officers to the Minister's office at the EL1 level. A number of departmental staff at varying levels were temporarily in the Minister's office during the transition to government and departmental staff have also
assisted in the Minister's office for short periods of less than 12 weeks to cover leave and vacant positions.

**Media Monitoring and Clipping Services**

(Question No.391)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Education and Training, in writing, on 3 September 2014:

In respect of media monitoring and clipping services in the financial periods since 7 September 2013, (a) what sum has been spent on such services engaged by (i) the Minister's office, and where applicable, each (ii) junior Minister (including Assistant Ministers), and (iii) Parliamentary Secretary, and (b) what was the (i) name, and (ii) postal address, of each media monitoring company engaged by each of these offices.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) Portfolio Ministerial offices access the same media monitoring as the Department of Education and costs are not attributed separately. As a means of managing the machinery of government transition to stand alone departments (announced on 18 September 2013) the departments of Employment and Education shared arrangements for media monitoring until 30 June 2014. It is not possible to disaggregate expenditure between the two departments. For the 2013-14 financial year, the shared media monitoring expenditure was $699,321.99 (GST exclusive). Media monitoring expenditure for the Department of Education from 1 July 2014 to 30 September 2014 was $213,302.33 (GST exclusive).

(b) (i) (ii) The two media monitoring providers' details are:

a. Australian Associated Press (AAP),
   PO Box 3411 Rhodes Waterside, Rhodes NSW 2138

b. iSentia (formerly Media Monitors Pty Ltd),
   131 Canberra Avenue, Griffith ACT 2603

**Prime Minister and Cabinet: Commonwealth Grants**

(Question No. 414)

Mr Conroy asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

In 2013-14, how many Commonwealth grants were approved by the Minister's department, and at what total cost, and of these, how many recipients have (a) signed funding agreements, and at what total cost, and (b) received payment, and at what total cost.

Mr Abbott: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The 2013-14 Commonwealth grants approved by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet have been published on the Department's website.

**Department of the Treasury: Commonwealth Grants**

(Question No. 419)

Mr Conroy asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

In 2013-14, how many Commonwealth grants were approved by the Minister's department, and at what total cost, and of these, how many recipients have (a) signed funding agreements, and at what total cost, and (b) received payment, and at what total cost.
Mr Hockey: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The Department of the Treasury approved one grant in 2013-14 at a total cost of $2,500. This grant is supported by a signed funding agreement at a total cost of $2,500. The grant recipient received a total payment of $2,500 in 2013-14.

**Department of the Environment: Commonwealth Grants (Question No. 429)**

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 22 September 2014:
In 2013-14, how many Commonwealth grants were approved by the Minister's department, and at what total cost, and of these, how many recipients have (a) signed funding agreements, and at what total cost, and (b) received payment, and at what total cost.

Mr Hunt: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Most grants are approved by the Minister however grants approved by the Department are reported in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of grants approved by the Department of the Environment in 2013-14</th>
<th>Total amount of approved grants 2013-14</th>
<th>Of the approved grants in 2013-14, how many recipients (a) signed funding agreements</th>
<th>(a.1) Total amount on executed contracts (GST Exclusive) for 2013-14</th>
<th>(b) Total amount paid (GST Exclusive) on executed contracts for 2013-14 as at 30 September 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$718,884</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$718,884</td>
<td>$566,366</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Attorney-General's Department: Staff Overseas Travel (Question No. 435)**

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 22 September 2014:
Since 7 September 2013, In respect of departmental staff overseas travel since 7 September 2013, what (a) was the total cost, (b) is the breakdown of this cost ie, airfares, accommodation, hospitality, official passports and minor incidentals, and (c) was the travel for.

Ms Julie Bishop: The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:
(a) was the total cost, $2,102,106.87
(b) breakdown of costs

| overseas airfares | $1,315,072.97 |
| travel and incidental allowance | $312,469.52 |
| overseas accommodation | $439,624.25 |
| overseas car/taxi hire | $34,940.13 |
(c) To provide further detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.
Attorney-General's Department: Corporate Credit Cards  
(Question No. 454)  

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 23 September 2014:  
Since 7 September 2013, how many corporate credit cards have been issued to departmental staff, and what is the total cost of all transactions made on them.  

Ms Julie Bishop: The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:  
176. The total cost was $292,302.

Prime Minister and Cabinet: Staffing  
(Question No. 469)  

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Special Minister of State, in writing, on 22 September 2014:  
Since 7 September 2013 and excluding payments associated with the change of government, per Ministerial office, (a) what is the total cost of ministerial staff separation payments, and (b) how many ministerial staff resignations have been tendered.  

Mr Andrews: The Special Minister of State has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:  
(a) For the period 7 September 2013 to 22 September 2014, the total cost of ministerial staff separation payments, i.e. severance benefits payable to staff whose employment is terminated, is $168,331.01, excluding leave entitlements.
(b) For the period 7 September 2013 to 22 September 2014, 34 ministerial staff resigned.

National Broadband Network  
(Question No. 471)  

Mr Clare asked the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 20 October 2014:  
According to the detailed design, what proportion (as a percentage) is the aerial component of the following fibre serving area modules expected to be: (a) 7BEV-02, (b) 7BEV-03, (c) 7BEV-04, (d) 7BEV-05, (e) 7GEW-02, (f) 7HOB-06, (g) 7HOB-07, (h) 7KIN-02, (i) 7KIN-04, (j) 7KIN-05, (k) 7LAU-05, (l) 7LAU-06, (m) 7LAU-07, (n) 7LAU-08, (o) 7LAU-09, (p) 7NWT-01, (q) 7SHL-02, (r) 7SHL-03, (s) 7SOE-01.  

Mr Turnbull: the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:  
The percentage of premises designed to be connected via an aerial lead in for the mentioned FSAMs are listed below.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under-constructed FSAMS</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7BEV-02</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7BEV-03</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7BEV-04</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7BEV-05</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7GEW-02</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7HOB-06</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7HOB-07</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7KIN-02</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7KIN-04</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr Albanese asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 23 September 2014:

In which publications has the new position of Chief Executive Officer of Infrastructure Australia been advertised.

Mr Truss: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Board agreed to continue Mr John Fitzgerald as Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for an interim period. The position of CEO is the responsibility of the new Board of Infrastructure Australia. I understand the executive recruitment firm Korn Ferry has been engaged to oversee the search for candidates for the role and that the position has been advertised in the national press.

Mrs Elliot asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 24 September 2014:

In respect of a statement by the Minister's department on 18 September 2014 claiming that Telstra staff will be taking up to 200 jobs in Centrelink and Medicare call centres, (a) how many (i) permanent employees, (ii) employees working pursuant to fixed contracts, (iii) part time employees, and (iv) casual employees, are currently engaged at the Centrelink and the Medicare call centre located in Tweed Heads South, and (b) how many people will lose their jobs from the Centrelink and Medicare call centre located in Tweed Heads South.

Mr Andrews: The Minister for Human Services, has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(a) As at 31 October 2014, the Department of Human Services (the department) had the following employee headcount located in Tweed Heads South:

(i) Ongoing (permanent) – 256

(ii) The department does not employ staff on fixed term contracts. As at 31 October 2014 there were 59 non-ongoing employees.

(iii) Ongoing and non-ongoing part time employees – 138

(iv) Intermittent and Irregular (casual) employees – 42
(b) There will be no job losses at the Tweed Heads Smart Centre as a result of the proposal to engage
Telstra.

Centrelink and Medicare Call Centres
(Question No. 482)

**Mrs Elliot** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on
24 September 2014:

In respect of a statement by the Minister's department on 18 September 2014 claiming that Telstra
staff will be taking up to 200 jobs in Centrelink and Medicare call centres, (a) what guarantees will be
provided that current pay rates and working conditions will not be diminished for those call centre staff
retaining employment, (b) will Telstra be able to (i) use third party call centre operators as it does with
its own call centre network, and (ii) relocate offshore the call centre work that it will undertake on the
behalf of Centrelink and Medicare, (c) what actions will be undertaken by the Minister's department and
Telstra to guarantee the security of personal and medical information currently held by Centrelink and
Medicare in the event that call centre services are transferred to Telstra, and (d) what restrictions will be
implemented to ensure that the personal and confidential records of Centrelink and Medicare clients
will be protected to mitigate against potential fraud.

**Mr Andrews**: The Minister for Human Services, has provided the following answer to the
honourable member's question:

(a) The setting of pay rates and conditions for departmental employees is done through the Enterprise
Agreement and cannot be impacted or changed by this proposal to partner with Telstra. The department
will continue to adhere to the terms and conditions outlined in the Enterprise Agreement.

(b) Telstra will:

(i) determine if they use a third party provider or Telstra employees;

(ii) not be able to relocate offshore the work that it will undertake.

(c) Maintaining the safety and security of customers' personal information is of the utmost importance
to the department. Should the arrangement proceed, the department would include within the contract
arrangements with Telstra, appropriate controls to ensure the ongoing integrity of the department's
customer information. This would include ensuring that a condition in the contract specifies that
individuals employed by Telstra are subject to the same standards, integrity and privacy requirements as
Department of Human Services (DHS) employees.

(d) The department has excellent systems to ensure the integrity of customer data and these same
systems will apply to the proposed arrangement. This includes mechanisms to mitigate potential fraud
activity.

Western Australia: Infrastructure
(Question No. 489)

**Ms MacTiernan** asked the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional
Development, in writing, on 1 October 2014:

In respect of his media release dated 10 September 2014 regarding Western Australian infrastructure
investment, quoting a figure of 11.7 per cent for Western Australia's share of federal infrastructure
spending, (a) how was this figure calculated, (b) what sources were used to calculate this figure, and (c)
for which period will this figure apply.

**Mr Briggs**: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Information regarding the Australian Government's record infrastructure investment programme can
be found on the Department's website.
Brown-Pascoe, Ms Heather
(Question No. 490)

Mr Katter asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 1 October 2014
(1) Is the Minister aware: (a) that between September 2013 and May 2014, the Toowoomba home of Ms Heather Brown-Pascoe, a nationally renowned campaigner to save prime farm land, has been burgled on three occasions; (b) that Ms Brown-Pascoe was the leading columnist in The Australian, is from a four generation farming family and currently runs Queensland’s major horse stud; (c) that during these break-ins, computers, laptops and filing cabinets of both Ms Brown-Pascoe and her husband, containing material relating to government business and political figures, were potentially accessed and that property has been stolen and information purloined; (d) of the fact that an insurance company has paid out for the losses from this break in provide proof that the break in and thefts occurred; (e) that Ms Brown-Pascoe and her husband were advised by their security team that the threat to their safety was real and escalating and arson was possible and under such advice they vacated their home; and (f) that despite considerable evidence, Ms Brown-Pascoe and her husband have hardly heard from the police and in fact no one is aware of any evidence that the police are even carrying out an investigation.

(2) Has the Minister had any contact with Queensland Police or relevant state Ministers regarding this matter.

(3) Is the Minister aware of any communications on this issue between Queensland Police and either State or Federal Ministers; if so, what was the nature of such contact and any discussions which may have occurred.

Ms Julie Bishop: The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

A written response to Question in Writing No. 490 has been forwarded directly to the office of Mr Katter on 2 October 2014. A copy of the letter can be obtained from the House of Representatives Table Office.

Brown-Pascoe, Heather Ms
(Question No. 491)

Mr Katter asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice, in writing, on 1 October 2014
(1) Is the Minister aware: (a) that between September 2013 and May 2014, the Toowoomba home of Ms Heather Brown-Pascoe, a nationally renowned campaigner to save prime farm land, has been burgled on three occasions; (b) that Ms Brown-Pascoe was the leading columnist in The Australian, is from a four generation farming family and currently runs Queensland’s major horse stud; (c) that during these break-ins, computers, laptops and filing cabinets of both Ms Brown-Pascoe and her husband, containing material relating to government business and political figures, were potentially accessed and that property has been stolen and information purloined; (d) of the fact that an insurance company has paid out for the losses from this break in provide proof that the break in and thefts occurred; (e) that Ms Brown-Pascoe and her husband were advised by their security team that the threat to their safety was real and escalating and arson was possible and under such advice they vacated their home; and (f) that despite considerable evidence, Ms Brown-Pascoe and her husband have hardly heard from the police and in fact no one is aware of any evidence that the police are even carrying out an investigation.

(2) Has the Minister had any contact with Queensland Police or relevant state Ministers regarding this matter.
(3) Is the Minister aware of any communications on this issue between Queensland Police and either State or Federal Ministers; if so, what was the nature of such contact and any discussions which may have occurred.

Ms Julie Bishop: The Minister for Justice provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

A written response to Question in Writing No. 491 has been forwarded directly to the office of Mr Katter on 2 October 2014. A copy of the letter can be obtained from the House of Representatives Table Office.

**Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd**

(Question No. 492)

Ms MacTiernan asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 30 September 2014:

(1) In respect of the Federal Court decision in *Serana (WA) Pty Ltd v Mignaccu-Randazzo SM* [2014] FCA 120, is he aware that

(a) there was a serious question as to the accuracy of, inter alia, an affidavit by Mr Andrew Baxter, an officer of his department, dated 10 December 2013 and relied on by a magistrate in issuing a search warrant,

(b) in a subsequent affidavit dated 24 January 2014, Mr Baxter sought to explain the application for a search warrant by reference to a series of emails he purported to have seen and certain words contained in those emails,

(c) in a further affidavit dated 4 February 2014, Mr Baxter said that the emails referred to in his affidavit of 24 January 2014 had not contained the words he relied on, rather they were the words of an informant/complainant,

(d) there was a prima facie case that the search warrant issued on reliance of Mr Baxter’s 10 December 2013 affidavit was unlawfully issued,

(e) it was Mr Baxter who was the 'true decision-maker' and not Mr Christopher Burleigh, another officer of his department, who sought advice and decided that a quarantine order should be made,

(f) there was 'no evidentiary basis to ground the suspicion' purported by Mr Baxter as justifying the decision to make a quarantine order,

(g) a quarantine order made in the course of a search executed on authority of that warrant issued by that magistrate was, prima facie, unlawfully made,

(g) despite having seized and held for two months approximately 7000 litres of bovine serum, his department was 'not able to produce in evidence one document that supported the suspicion that the applicant had imported serum from a non-foot-and-mouth disease-free country', and

(h) despite having stated in its application for a search warrant that Serana was suspected of importing and blending serum from non-foot-and-mouth disease-free countries since September 2008, his department adduced no evidence in support of that allegation.

(2) Has there been an investigation into the actions of his departmental officials in their preparation for and conduct of these proceedings; if so, what were the results of the investigation; if not, why not.

**Mr Joyce:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) I am aware that the Federal Court considered the issue of a warrant granted to the department in relation to Serana. I am also aware of the broader circumstances of the matter. As you are aware, court proceedings were settled by both parties prior to a final hearing. The Judge noted during proceedings, as reflected in the transcript, the court did not have the benefit of all available evidence.
(2) The department has conducted inquiries into the actions of departmental officials in their preparation for and conduct of these proceedings. The inquiries did not identify any evidence of deliberate wrong doing.

Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd  
(Question No. 497)

Ms MacTiernan asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 30 September 2014:
(1) For how long has Mr Andrew Baxter been employed in his department.
(2) What positions has Mr Baxter held within his department.
(3) What qualifications are required for the position of Chief Investigating Officer (CIO).
(4) What investigating background did Mr Baxter have in order to obtain the position of CIO.
(5) Is Mr Baxter still employed by his department; if not, (a) when was his employment terminated, and (b) under what circumstances was he terminated.

Mr Joyce: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(1) Mr Baxter was employed with the department from 29 April 2013 to 16 September 2014.
(2) Mr Baxter held one position within the department, that of Regional Investigations Manager within the Central East Region.
(3) There is no such position as the 'Chief Investigating Officer' in the Department of Agriculture.
(4) See response to (3) above.
(5) Mr Baxter resigned from the department, taking effect on 16 September 2014. His resignation was based on personal circumstances and was not connected with this or any other operational matter.

Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd  
(Question No. 498)

Ms MacTiernan asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 30 September 2014:
What is the total cost to his department of the investigation into Serana (WA) Pty Ltd, and what is the breakdown for (a) court proceedings (including costs awarded against his department), (b) commercial (i) airfares, (ii) car hire, and (iii) accommodation, and (c) charter aircraft between Perth and Bunbury.

Mr Joyce: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
As at 27 November 2014, the total costs of the Serana investigation were as follows:
(a) Court proceedings totalled $220,189.71. This included legal fees and settlement costs.
(b) (i) Airfare costs for a total of 20 return flights to Perth, Melbourne, Hobart and Canberra $ 8,032.29
(ii) Car hire costs for two vehicles to travel return from Perth to Bunbury $481.83
(iii) Accommodation costs for total of 20 trips to Perth, Melbourne, Hobart and Canberra where overnight accommodation was required $6,855.25.
Other costs include freight costs for the transportation of evidence totalling $1,896.75:
(c) The department did not charter an aircraft between Perth and Bunbury.

Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd  
(Question No. 499)

Ms MacTiernan asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 30 September 2014:
(1) How many representations have been made to his office in respect of the handling of the Serana (WA) Pty Ltd investigation by his department, and on what date was the first representation made to his office.

(2) What action did he take to ensure that departmental officers were not behaving in an unfair way during the investigation, and did he, as part of this process, acquaint himself with the rulings and decisions of the Federal Court dated 20 February 2014.

(3) In light of the Federal Court's concern about the truth of the contents of the affidavits of Mr Andrew Baxter dated 10 December 2013 and 24 January 2014, what action has been taken to review Mr Baxter's conduct in providing sworn evidence that was at the very least inaccurate.

Mr Joyce: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) The Department does not hold this information.
(2) The Department does not hold this information.
(3) The errors in Mr Baxter's affidavit were genuine mistakes made unintentionally and identified by Mr Baxter himself. No investigation was commenced into the conduct of the sworn evidence.

Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd
(Question No. 500)

Ms MacTiernan asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 30 September 2014:

In respect of the current investigation into the alleged disclosure of confidential information about Serana (WA) Pty Ltd being provided to third parties, (a) on what date did it commence, (b) when is it anticipated to be concluded, and (c) who is conducting it.

Mr Joyce: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) The investigation commenced on 14 October 2014.
(b) It is anticipated the investigation will be concluded in the first quarter of the 2015 calendar year.
(c) The investigation is being conducted by qualified investigators in my department's Fraud and Security Section.

Infrastructure and Regional Development: Executive Training
(Question No. 503)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for (a) Executive, and (b) Senior Executive Service, level departmental officials, and what (i) total sum has the Minister's Department spent, and (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

Mr Truss: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) and (ii) Training attended by Executive Level staff and cost breakdown

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<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<td>The Campbell Lecture Series</td>
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<td>ANZSOG Executive Masters in Public Administration</td>
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<td>ANZSOG Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appearing before Parliamentary Committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Thinking</td>
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<td>EL Transition</td>
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Course Name | Cost
------- | ----
Build team performance through coaching | $5,700
Change Management | $3,050
Cost Benefit Analysis | $14,253
Public Policy Short Course | $3,700
Crucial Conversations | $16,617
Data and Evidence for Effective Decision Making | $8,500
Decision Making (Mt Eliza) | $9,860
Excellence in Decision Making | $14,544
Foundations of Successful People Management | $18,000
Effective Performance Conversations | $2,895
APS Executive Level Leadership Network Annual Forum | $5,880
Evaluation Training | $16,000
SES Role Evaluation Training | $125
Influencing and Negotiation Skills | $18,846
Leading change and promoting resilience | $8,400
Leading for Impact | $13,720
Leading with Mastery and Insight | $7,054
Instructional design | $909
The art of policy narrative | $1,000
Understanding performance, productivity and trends | $10,200
Writing for ELs | $2,940
Fundamentals of Project Management | $800
Know your legislation | $900

(b) and (ii) Training attended by Senior Executive Level staff and cost breakdown

Course Name | Cost
------- | ----
London School of Economics | $31,392
Appearing before Parliamentary Committees | ** included above

(i) Total estimated sum spent = $358,716

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Executive Training

(Question No. 504)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 21 October:

Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for (a) Executive, and (b) Senior Executive Service, level departmental officials, and what (i) total sum has the Minister's department spent, and (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Total expenditure from the department's centralised Learning and Development budget for corporate training for Executive Level and Senior Executive Service officials between 7 September 2013 and 30 June 2014 is $4,682,919. This includes $764,419 for Leadership and Management skills training, $522,942 for Public Sector skills training and $3,395,558 for Language training.

Between 7 September 2012 and 30 June 2013, DFAT's expenditure on the same activities was $3,581,163. AusAID spent a further $3.6 million on learning and development in financial year 2012-13.
Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for (a) Executive, and (b) Senior Executive Service, level departmental officials, and what (i) total sum has the Minister’s department spent, and (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

Ms Julie Bishop: The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

See the answer to Question on Notice BE14/163 for information relating to the period from Supplementary Budget Estimates in November 2013 to 29 May 2014. The attachment is available from the House of Representatives Table Office. Providing further information to cover the period from 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014 would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources.

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for agriculture, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for (a) Executive, and (b) Senior Executive Service, level departmental officials, and what (i) total sum has the Minister’s department spent, and (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

Mr Joyce: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Training that has been provided to Executive level and Senior Executive Service level employees for the period 7 September 2013-30 June 2014, including a breakdown of costs is at Attachment A.

The total expenditure for training provided during this period was $923,511.

In addition to the training outlined in Attachment A, the department has in place a Mandatory Learning Policy which required all staff to complete the following seven eLearning modules by 30 June 2014:

- Workplace Diversity and Inclusion
- Fraud and Corruption Awareness
- Uphold Values and Principles of Public Service
- Security Awareness
- Fire and Emergency Evacuation Instruction
- Contribute to Work Health and Safety
- Privacy Principles.

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<tr>
<th>Training Course</th>
<th>EL participants</th>
<th>SES participants</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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Questions in Writing
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*As part of the Memorandum of Understanding with the National Security College the Department made an annual contribution of $55,000 for the 2013-14 financial year. This provided access to 7 training programs during the financial year.
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**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**
(Summary of eLearning through Departmental Learning Management System – 7 September 2013 – 30 June 2014)

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<td>National Cargo Surveillance for Biosecurity Risk Material</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to Department of Agriculture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Exports - Core Modules</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Exports - Grain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Exports - Horticulture Level 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Mapping Basics</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory Officer Note Taking</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Inspections</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Enabled Crime</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Basics and the World Trade Organization</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Education and Training: Executive Training**  
(Question No. 510)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Education and Training, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for (a) Executive, and (b) Senior Executive Service, level departmental officials, and what (i) total sum has the Minister's department spent, and (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Details of the 'executive coaching and/or other leadership training services' purchased by the Department of Education (the department) during the period were provided in the response to Questions on Notice ED0102_14 and ED0132_15.

The department has also provided other corporately run training programmes during the period although access to these programmes was not limited to EL and SES level employees only.

Details of these training programmes are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of training programme</th>
<th>Name of training programme provider</th>
<th>Number of EL and SES participants</th>
<th>Training programme cost per participant (GST Inclusive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation and Influencing</td>
<td>ENS International Pty Ltd</td>
<td>EL (8) SES (4)</td>
<td>$3,786.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to develop your leadership style</td>
<td>Primetime Training</td>
<td>EL (12)</td>
<td>$82.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to give effective feedback</td>
<td>Primetime Training</td>
<td>EL (10) SES (1)</td>
<td>$82.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to coach your people</td>
<td>Primetime Training</td>
<td>EL (13)</td>
<td>$82.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, during the period one EL level employee commenced in the Executive Masters in Public Administration (EMPA) programme delivered by the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). The total cost of this programme was $43,877.80 (GST Inclusive).

Individuals may also have received training as part of their individual performance and development agreements but this is managed by line areas and information is not collected centrally.

**Industry: Executive Training**  
(Question No. 512)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for (a) Executive, and (b) Senior Executive Service, level departmental officials, and what (i) total sum has the Minister's department spent, and (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:


**Social Services: Executive Training**  
(Question No. 513)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 21 October 2014:
Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for (a) Executive, and (b) Senior Executive Service, level departmental officials, and what (i) total sum has the Minister's department spent, and (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

**Mr Andrews:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The information available can be found in the answer to 2014-15 Budget Estimates question number 941.

To answer this question further would require an unreasonable diversion of resources.

### Human Services: Executive Training
*(Question No. 514)*

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for: (a) Executive; and (b) Senior Executive Service level departmental officials; and what (i) total sum has the Minister's department spent; and what (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

**Mr Andrews:** The Minister for Human Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The department has 3,538 substantive Executive Level employees. Data would need to be manually extracted to provide this level of detail. This would be an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.

The department provides a range of internal training programmes for Senior Executive Service Level department officials in areas such as Privacy and Secrecy provisions, Financial Management, Code of Conduct and Occupational Health and Safety provisions. The costs associated with the delivery of these internal programmes are not actively recorded. The total centrally recorded cost of Senior Executive Service Level external training during this period was $148,790.

The breakdown in cost for such externally provided training is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APSC</td>
<td>Leading Australia's Future in the Asia-Pacific (LAFIA) South East Asia</td>
<td>$21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZSOG</td>
<td>Executive Fellows Programme</td>
<td>$29,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZSOG</td>
<td>Executive Workshop: Women in Leadership</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSC</td>
<td>SES Band 2 leadership Programme</td>
<td>$38,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSC</td>
<td>SES Band 1 Orientation Programme</td>
<td>$12,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Leadership Australia</td>
<td>Sydney Leadership Programme</td>
<td>$18,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSC</td>
<td>SES Band 2 Talent Development Programme</td>
<td>$19,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$148,790</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Department of the Environment: Executive Training
*(Question No. 517)*

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for (a) Executive, and (b) Senior Executive Service, level departmental officials, and what (i) total sum has the Minister's department spent, and (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

**Mr Hunt:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(i) The total cost of training activities between 7 September 2013 and 30 June 2014 is $283,074 (GST exclusive).

(ii) The breakdown in cost for these activities is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Staff Classification</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellence in Leadership and</td>
<td>Executive Level*</td>
<td>$202,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Executive level*</td>
<td>$2,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive coaching</td>
<td>SES Officers</td>
<td>$34,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranlana Programme</td>
<td>SES Officers</td>
<td>$6,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>SES Officers</td>
<td>$2,796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>SES Officers</td>
<td>$27,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES Orientation</td>
<td>SES Officers</td>
<td>$6,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$283,074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Costs of centrally managed training only. Training for Executive Level staff is managed within Divisions based on the specific needs of those areas.

**Department of Veterans' Affairs: Executive Training**  
*(Question No. 519)*

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for (a) Executive, and (b) Senior Executive Service, level departmental officials, and what (i) total sum has the Minister's department spent, and (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

Mr Andrews: the Minister for Veterans' Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The responses are provided from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014, as it would be too resource intensive to provide from 7 September 2013.

Whilst most training provided to departmental staff is centrally recorded, some is managed by individual business areas. It would be too resource intensive to provide information on these individual programs.

See Table 1 for centrally recorded training provided to (a) Executive and (b) Senior Executive Service level departmental officials:

(i) The total sum spent on this training was $445,034.09.

(ii) The breakdown in cost for such training is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Centrally recorded training provided to Executive and Senior Executive Service level departmental officials from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Total cost for EL</th>
<th>Total cost for SES</th>
<th>Total cost SES/EL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014 SES/EL Forums</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Approx 79,510.30</td>
<td>Approx 14,190.81</td>
<td>93,701.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrenaline Training</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,195.81</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>5,195.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSC SES Leadership Conversations &amp; Short Courses</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2,360.00</td>
<td>2,360.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asbestos Awareness Training</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>EL</td>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Total cost for EL</td>
<td>Total cost for SES</td>
<td>Total cost SES/EL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Institute of Company Directors - Company Directors Course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>6,310.00</td>
<td>6,310.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia New Zealand School of Government Executive Fellows Program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>29,887.00</td>
<td>29,887.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia New Zealand School of Government Towards Strategic Leadership Program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20,295.00</td>
<td>20,295.00</td>
<td>40,590.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Written Correspondence</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,590.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3,590.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Assessment Centre</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>47,000.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>47,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre Against Sexual Assault Workshop</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>181.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>181.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranlana Colloquium</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6,490.00</td>
<td>6,490.00</td>
<td>12,980.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford School of Public Policy - formerly Australian National Institute of Public Policy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18,159.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>18,159.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice &amp; Maintainability in Veterans' Services (CMVS) Update Income &amp; Assets &amp; Change Payment Destination (Income Support Training)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints Feedback Management System &amp; Feedback Management Policy Overview</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness Training</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>760.71</td>
<td>50.71</td>
<td>811.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Human Services (DHS) Induction Training</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desktop Modernisation Training</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27,090.91</td>
<td>545.45</td>
<td>27,636.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme (DHOAS) Development Day</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Leadership Program</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>61,917.43</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>61,917.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting that Selection Right</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6,095.24</td>
<td>190.48</td>
<td>6,285.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Supervisor Workshop</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,105.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3,105.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment Contact Officer Training</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7,038.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>7,038.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's Why We're Here</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7,071.27</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>7,071.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Whalan Learning Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9,790.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>9,790.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Application and Interview Skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7,045.75</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>7,045.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Essentials - APSC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>595.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>595.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing APS Contracts and Service Providers - APSC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Sensitive Conversations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>927.30</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>927.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual Handling and Ergonomics Training</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>577.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>577.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Program Workshop</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21,386.95</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>21,386.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Induction Program</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing Bullying and Harassment workshop</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1,891.29</td>
<td>2,750.97</td>
<td>4,642.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement and Contract Management Training</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Public Service - An EL1 Masterclass</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,890.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2,890.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector Management Program</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7,890.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>7,890.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Awareness Sessions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES Band 1 Leadership Program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3,500.00</td>
<td>3,500.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questions in Writing**
Overseas Travel: Ministers Accompanied With Their Spouse
(Question No. 520)

Mr Conroy asked the Prime Minister in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 can he list all trips undertaken by ministers accompanied by their spouse where the spouse (a) was not invited by a foreign government or host organisation, and (b) did not have an official program of events separate to that of the Minister; and what was the cost of each trip in parts (a) and (b).

Mr Abbott: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Unlike the previous government, the Prime Minister has set out his expectations to Ministers in relation to Commonwealth funded overseas travel, including the cessation of taxpayer funded first class travel that occurred under the previous government. Any spouse travel should be an exception, not the rule, and will usually only be approved if costs are met personally by the Minister and accompanying spouse.

The final costs of international travel by ministers are reported to the Department of Finance and published every 6 months on the department's website at: http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/parliamentarians-reporting/.

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Consultants
(Question No. 522)

Mr Conroy asked the Prime Minister in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 can the Minister provide details as to the use of all consultants within his/her department, including reasons for engaging their services, and the costs involved.

Mr Abbott: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Details of consultancies valued over the reporting threshold of $10,000 undertaken since 7 September 2013 are published on AusTender (www.tenders.gov.au). Consultancies valued under this reporting threshold are not recorded centrally.

Department of the Treasury: Consultants
(Question No. 527)

Mr Conroy asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 21 October 2014:
Since 7 September 2013 can the Minister provide details as to the use of all consultants within his/her department, including reasons for engaging their services, and the costs involved.

Mr Hockey: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Information is published on: www.austender.gov.au.

**Department of Education: Consultants**
*(Question No. 530)*

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Education, in writing, on 21 October 2014:
Since 7 September 2013 can the Minister provide details as to the use of all consultants within his department, including reasons for engaging their services, and the costs involved.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Information on consultancies is available on the AusTender website at www.tenders.gov.au.

**Industry: Consultants**
*(Question No. 532)*

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, in writing, on 21 October 2014:
Since 7 September 2013 can the Minister provide details as to the use of all consultants within his/her department, including reasons for engaging their services, and the costs involved.

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Details of relevant consultancies undertaken by the Department of Industry since 7 September 2013 are available at www.tenders.gov.au.

**Social Services: Consultants**
*(Question No. 533)*

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 21 October 2014:
Since 7 September 2013 can the Minister provide details as to the use of all consultants within his/her department, including reasons for engaging their services, and the costs involved.

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Details of consultancies undertaken by the Department of Social Services valued at $10,000 or more since 7 September 2013 are publically available on the AusTender internet site (https://www.tenders.gov.au/)

Details of consultancies valued below $10,000 entered into between 07 September 2013 and 21 October 2014 are listed in Table 1.

The information published on AusTender and listed in Table 1 does not include consultancies transferred to other departments as a result of Machinery of Government changes.

**Table 1—DSS consultancies undertaken since 7 September 2013 valued at less than $10,000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vendor</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miller Harris Lawyers</td>
<td>Strategic advice &amp; review services</td>
<td>Need for specialised or professional skills</td>
<td>18.10.2013</td>
<td>16.12.2013</td>
<td>3,200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stones Throw Consulting</td>
<td>Strategic advice &amp; review services</td>
<td>Need for specialised or professional skills</td>
<td>09.12.2013</td>
<td>27.01.2014</td>
<td>8,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBA Consulting</td>
<td>Assessment and evaluation</td>
<td>Need for independent</td>
<td>22.04.2014</td>
<td>04.06.2014</td>
<td>8,800.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 can the Minister provide details as to the use of all consultants within his/her department, including reasons for engaging their services, and the costs involved?

Mr Andrews: The Minister for Human Services has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The Department of Human Services had seven consultancy contracts in use between 7 September 2013 and 21 October 2014 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultant Name</th>
<th>Subject Matter</th>
<th>Consultancy Reason</th>
<th>Contract Start Date</th>
<th>Contract End Date</th>
<th>Contract Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access Testing Pty Ltd</td>
<td>Usability Evaluation</td>
<td>Need for independent research or assessment</td>
<td>19/06/14</td>
<td>30/9/14</td>
<td>$53,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Institute of Family Studies</td>
<td>MyGov Inbox Evaluation of Case Coordination Trial</td>
<td>Need for independent research or assessment</td>
<td>25/11/12</td>
<td>30/9/14</td>
<td>$550,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bendelta Pty Ltd</td>
<td>Comprehensive review of Social Work Services Operating Model</td>
<td>Skills currently unavailable within agency</td>
<td>20/05/14</td>
<td>30/6/14</td>
<td>$148,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deloitte Actuaries and Consultants Ltd</td>
<td>Independent actuary review of Comcare premium</td>
<td>Need for independent research or assessment</td>
<td>02/10/14</td>
<td>30/10/14</td>
<td>$28,875</td>
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<tr>
<td>KPMG</td>
<td>Independent Assurer Services</td>
<td>Need for specialised or professional skills</td>
<td>01/07/13</td>
<td>30/6/14</td>
<td>$700,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCS International Pty Ltd</td>
<td>Audit against the Disability Services Standard</td>
<td>Need for specialised or professional skills</td>
<td>01/07/09</td>
<td>30/6/14</td>
<td>$335,103</td>
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</table>
Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 can the Minister provide details as to the use of all consultants within his/her department, including reasons for engaging their services, and the costs involved.

Mr Dutton: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

There were 299 consultancy contracts recorded as active within the period 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014. A listing of the Department of Health's consultancies valued at $10,000 (GST Inclusive) or more, including the name of the consultant, consultancy description and reason, cost and the method of procurement (ie open tender, direct source, etc) is publicly available on the AusTender website at the following link:


Department of Veterans’ Affairs: Consultants
(Question No. 539)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 can the Minister provide details as to the use of all consultants within his/her department, including reasons for engaging their services, and the costs involved.

Mr Andrews: The Minister for Veterans’ Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable Member's question:

This information can be obtained in the Department of Veteran’s Affairs Annual Report and on the AusTender website www.tenders.gov.au.

Strategic Centre for Leadership, Learning and Development
(Question No. 540)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Trade and Investment, in writing, on 21 October:

In respect of the Strategic Centre for Leadership, Learning and Development, can he provide the details (a) for contract CN2564751 for a Memorandum of Understanding, (b) on the use for the Centre, including the specific need for the Centre, and (c) on the $93,200 contract for the Centre.

Mr Robb: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) Austender notice CN2564751 reported on the Memorandum of Understanding between Austrade and the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) in relation to funding for the Strategic Centre for Leadership, Learning and Development and a review of the Workplace Relations Framework.
The Memorandum of Understanding was dated 18 August 2011 and provides funding for the APSC to undertake a body of fee-for-service activities on behalf of the Australian Public Service (APS) during the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2016.

Under the funding model outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding, each APS agency employing more than 200 staff contributes funding to the APSC for this set of activities.

The arrangement was supported by the Secretaries Board and aims to realise benefits for the APS by taking a more strategic, service-wide collaborative approach to enable agencies to secure economies of scale or efficiencies in relation to the services activities detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding.

(b) Under the Memorandum of Understanding, services to be provided by the APSC include:

- Leadership, learning and development and talent management
- developing and refreshing the APS leadership development strategy
- contemporary leadership development program/intervention design principles (for cross-APS leadership and core skills programs)
- management of a high potential development system for intensive development of high potential leaders
- quality assurance of program/development providers
- central brokerage and procurement and brokering of programs/interventions where it is identified that there are clear value for money or consistency benefits (for the APS)
- evaluation of leadership development strategy and leadership development programs/interventions.
- thought leadership and support and advice for agencies.
- Workplace relations reviews including reviews of APS classification and work level standards
- advice to agencies on the scope for improving APS classification structures
- developing an endorsed set of APS-wide Work Level Standards and additional implementation guidance
- management of the collection and analysis of remuneration data to inform policy development
- advice to Government on remuneration policy options before the next bargaining round (now the current round)
- advice on the links between performance and pay advancement.

(c) The amount in Contract CN2564751 is the estimated amount, not what has actually been paid to date.

The $93,200 contract value reported for the five year period was calculated based on the contributions for an agency with 500-999 employees.

Austrade has paid $71,400 to date, excluding GST.

National Injury Insurance Scheme
(Question No. 548)

Dr Leigh asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 23 October 2014:

(1) In respect of the Productivity Commission recommendation in August 2011 for the establishment of the National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS) with four streams, (a) motor accident, (b) workplace accidents, (c) medical treatment accidents, and (d) general accidents, (i) what progress has been made so far in the development of the four NIIS streams, and (ii) has a minimum benchmark been established in all four streams.

(2) How will the NIIS build on and interact with existing state and territory accident compensation...
schemes, and does the introduction of the NIIS mean that these existing state schemes are no longer viable.

(3) Do the states and territories have any flexibility in respect of the implementation of the NIIS; if so, what happens if a jurisdiction does not fully meet the minimum benchmarks set by the NIIS.

(4) What is the long term plan for the NIIS, and will it eventually completely replace all existing state and territory accident compensation schemes.

**Mr Hockey:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) to (4) Significant progress has been made in relation to the NIIS.

- The motor vehicle accidents stream is the most developed. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to minimum benchmarks and some jurisdictions have amended their compulsory third party insurance schemes to meet the minimum benchmarks.
- Minimum benchmarks for workplace accidents have been identified, with a consultation process expected to occur over coming months.
- A discussion paper has been produced to explore the issues around minimum benchmarks for medical accidents, and the Council on Federal Financial Relations is expected to provide advice to COAG in early 2015.
- Commonwealth and state and territory Treasuries are currently undertaking scoping work on the general accidents stream to identify the type, severity and distribution of general accidents in preparation for the development of minimum benchmarks.

**Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System**

(Question No. 550)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 28 October 2014:

(1) Did he refuse to grant Livestock Shipping Services (LSS) from 13 to 21 October 2014 for either Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) approval or an export permit for a shipment to Israel and Jordan, then Kuwait, in respect of the Maysora livestock vessel that recently departed Adelaide for Fremantle and Qatar.

(2) Has his department taken evidence in respect of ESCAS breaches by LSS to the Department of Public Prosecution for assessment.

(3) When will his department conclude its investigations into complaints of ESCAS breaches in Gaza lodged between February and July 2014.

(4) How many (a) investigators does his department have in its Investigations and Enforcement Unit, and (b) investigations into allegations of ESCAS breaches are yet to commence.

**Mr Joyce:** The Minister for Agriculture has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(1) No.

(2) It is not appropriate to comment on matters that may or may not be under assessment with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.

(3) It is difficult to estimate when both regulatory and criminal investigations into complaints of ESCAS breaches in Gaza will be concluded. There are a number of issues and stakeholders to consider with a large volume of information to analyse and subsequent enquiries to be conducted. ESCAS investigations typically take several months to complete partly due to (in addition to the large volumes of information) evidence and witnesses being located overseas. The investigations are ongoing.

(4) (a) The department has 41 staff in the investigations unit.
(b) All allegations received relating to possible ESCAS breaches, whether it be of a criminal or regulatory compliance nature, are currently in progress.

**WestConnex**

*(Question No. 554)*

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 28 October 2014:

Will the final route of WestConnex be determined by the New South Wales Government or the winner of a tender process.

**Mr Truss:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The final route of WestConnex will be determined by the New South Wales Government and will be informed by the tender process.

**WestConnex**

*(Question No. 555)*

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 28 October 2014:

What conditions has the Australian Government placed on payment of further funds to the New South Wales Government for the WestConnex project, and what milestones apply to (a) Stage 1, (b) Stage 2, and (c) Stage 3.

**Mr Truss:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The New South Wales Government must comply with the conditions set out in the National Partnership Agreement signed on 10 October 2014 and the associated Notes on Administration. Both of these documents are available on the Department's website.

Payment milestones for WestConnex are yet to be determined.

**WestConnex**

*(Question No. 556)*

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 28 October 2014:

What assurances does the Australian Government require about the level of consultation with affected communities in respect of (a) Stage 1, (b) Stage 2, and (c) Stage 3, of the WestConnex project.

**Mr Truss:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The WestConnex Delivery Authority (WDA) is implementing a community consultation programme, details of which are contained on the WestConnex website at www.westconnex.com.au. Departmental officials monitor and keep updated on those consultation activities.

**Sustainable Development Goals**

*(Question No. 564)*

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 28 October 2014:

(1) Is she aware (a) that in 2015 the United Nations is scheduled to announce the Sustainable Development Goals, a set of international objectives to improve global well-being, and (b) that the
French Government's 2008 Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress concluded that GDP is dangerously inadequate as a measure of quality of life, and (c) of 'The Future We Want', the declaration of the 2012 Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development agreed to by all United Nations Member States, which reached the same conclusion.

(2) What action is the Australian Government taking to assist in (a) the development of the Sustainable Development Goals, and (b) providing broader indicators of social performance than GDP.

**Ms Julie Bishop:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) (a) Yes.
(b) Yes.
(c) Yes.

(2) (a) See departmental response to Question on Notice 472 of Budget Estimates 2014 15.
(b) The Australian Government is committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include a range of indicators of social performance in poverty, education, health and gender equality, as well as economic indicators.

**Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd**  
**(Question No. 565)**

**Ms MacTiernan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 29 October 2014:

In respect of the visit to the home of Serana (WA) Pty Ltd employee Ms Jigal Mistry by Mr Andrew Baxter and another gentleman, (a) will he identify the second person, and (b) was the second person a departmental officer; if so, what was his position; if not, why did he accompany Mr Baxter to Ms Mistry's home.

**Mr Joyce:** The Minister for Agriculture has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(a) Only departmental officers conduct investigations. Mr Baxter was accompanied by Senior Investigator Mark Hannigan.

(b) Refer to response a.

**Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd**  
**(Question No. 566)**

**Ms MacTiernan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 29 October 2014:

In respect of the Federal Court's finding on 20 February 2014 that the search warrant obtained by his department against Serana (WA) Pty Ltd was unlawfully issued because of concern over the truthfulness of affidavits sworn by Mr Andrew Baxter on 10 December 2013 and 24 January 2014, what action has been taken to review Mr Baxter's conduct in providing sworn evidence that was, at the very least, inaccurate.

**Mr Joyce:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Please see response to Question No 499 (3).

**Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd**  
**(Question No. 567)**

**Ms MacTiernan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 29 October 2014:

In respect of the matter of Serana (WA) Pty Ltd serums quarantined following his department's raid of Serena's Bunbury premises in December 2013, (a) can his department explain why no testing of the quarantined serum was made for two months, and then tested only after his department's failure to test
was queried by the Court during the Federal Court proceeding, (b) when the test results on the quarantined Serana serum were returned showing no evidence of material from banned countries, did his department review the need to continue its aggressive investigation of this company, and (c) what was the outcome of the investigation into the serums.

**Mr Joyce:** The answer to the honourable member's question, is as follows:

(a) The department was willing to return all of the serum as soon as it could have confidence that the serum's provenance (where it was sourced from) meant it was unlikely to pose a threat to Australia’s biosecurity. To achieve this, the department provided Serana the opportunity to establish provenance of labelled and unlabelled serum on numerous occasions. Serana subsequently failed to provide sufficient evidence to show that the serum came from countries recognised as free from foot and mouth disease. Following this the department sought out a test that, when combined with documentary evidence, provided sufficient assurances. Labelled serum held by the department was returned in accordance with court orders and the unlabelled serum was returned after the department received the test results. All physical property was returned by mid April 2014.

(b) It is not appropriate to comment on a current investigation.

(c) It is not appropriate to comment on a current investigation.

**Department of Agriculture: Serana (WA) Pty Ltd**

(Question No. 568)

**Ms MacTiernan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 29 October 2014:

In respect of the Reasons of Judgement of the Federal Court proceedings between Serana (WA) Pty Ltd and various departmental officers, where the judge said he inferred that the information on which the investigation was made was obtained from a competitor of the applicant, with his department denying in subsequent statements that this was the source, can his department clarify the source of information that led to this enquiry.

**Mr Joyce:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

A formal investigation into the potential contravention of Australian quarantine law was initiated. It was initiated based on information arising from a biosecurity product tracing process after the department received information about potential biosecurity risks associated with imported bovine serum. I am advised that the department confirms that the source of the information to the department was not a competitor.

**Social Services: Funding**

(Question No. 574)

**Ms Rowland** asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

In respect of a press release dated 29 October 2014 where he said that about $545 million is committed in 2014-15 to initiatives for multicultural communities, can he list the (a) specific initiatives, and (b) funding allocated to each initiative.

**Mr Morrison:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

These initiatives include settlement services for migrants and humanitarian entrants, delivered under the Humanitarian Settlement Services programme, Complex Case Support programme and grants for settlement services.

Funding is also allocated for Diversity and Social Cohesion and Multicultural Arts and Festivals grants, to support multicultural communities; the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters; and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia.
The amount of $545 million includes the total of the Settlement Services line item, and around $8 million of the Strengthening Communities line item, listed on page 98 of the 2014-15 Portfolio Budget Statements for the Department of Social Services.

**Employment**

(Question Nos 575 and 577)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

Is the Minister aware of the latest Small Area Labour Markets (June Quarter 2014) figures, which show that unemployment in Melbourne's inner northern suburbs has been increasing rapidly since the 2013 election of the Government.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Minister is aware of employment data for Melbourne.

In addition, the Minister notes that while historical Small Area Labour Market data are only available back to December 2012, the unemployment rate in the ABS Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) of Melbourne – Inner (the SA4 within which the majority of Melbourne's inner northern suburbs fall) rose from 3.3 per cent in November 2007 to 6.6 per cent in September 2013, before increasing to 6.7 per cent in October 2014. It is noted that the Honourable Member did not express any concern for the doubling of the unemployment rate under the government of which he was a member.

It is clear that some Australian regions are currently experiencing difficult labour market conditions, which is why the Government is implementing a multi-faceted strategy that will create jobs through a strong economy, whilst ensuring that job seekers have the skills, support and incentives to take up these jobs. The Government's Economic Action Strategy will get the economic fundamentals right, reduce red tape, and boost investment which will create confidence in the economy and support employers to create jobs.

The Government recognises that job creation needs to be matched by measures that ensure that job seekers have the skills employers need, which is why it has announced changes to employment services which commence in July 2015. These changes will reinvigorate employment services for job seekers and employers and deliver a system that is more responsive and focused on results. Combined with reforms to vocational education and training, job seekers will be work ready, ensuring that Australia's workforce is skilled and flexible.

It is regrettable that the Honourable Member is opposed to almost every job creating measure that this Government has brought forward. He may care to explain to his electorate why he would rather rising unemployment in his electorate than job creating policies.

(Question Nos 578, 579, 581 and 582)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is the Minister aware that unemployment in the City of Moreland, Melbourne, increased from 6.8 per cent in September 2013 to 8.0 per cent in June 2014.

(2) Is the Minister aware that since the 2013 change of government, unemployment in the City of Moreland suburb of Coburg, has risen from 8.5 per cent to 10 per cent, and that unemployment in the City of Moreland suburbs of Brunswick and Fawkner, has also climbed by around 1.5 per cent to be 9 per cent.

(3) What action is the Government taking to reverse the rising trend in unemployment in the City of Moreland.

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QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) and (2). Yes. The Minister can advise that he has not received any representations from the Honourable Member on this matter.

The Minister also notes that while historical Small Area Labour Market data at the LGA level are only available back to December 2012, the unemployment rate in the two ABS Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4s) within which the City of Moreland falls (Melbourne – Inner and Melbourne – North West) increased significantly over the period November 2007 to September 2013 (up by 3.2 percentage points to 6.6 per cent and 3.1 percentage points to 7.0 per cent, respectively). Further, over the period September 2013 to October 2014, the unemployment rate in Melbourne – Inner has increased by 0.1 percentage point to stand at 6.7 per cent, while the unemployment rate in Melbourne – North West has remained steady, at 7.0 per cent. It is also noted that the Honourable Member did not express any concern under the former government where the unemployment rate almost doubled.

(3). It is clear that some Australian regions are currently experiencing difficult labour market conditions, which is why the Government will be increasing employment opportunities right across the country by:

- rolling out the nation's biggest infrastructure program to strengthen the economy and create thousands of jobs;
- implementing free-trade agreements with China, Korea and Japan, which will add billions to the economy, create jobs and drive higher living standards for Australians;
- returning the budget to surplus to support a positive investment climate;
- abolishing the Carbon Tax and Mining Tax;
- cutting red tape and reducing the impact of regulation on business; and
- streamlining environmental approvals and removing unnecessary green tape.

The Government is also implementing a range of other measures to help job seekers move into work. Young job seekers aged 18 to 30 will benefit from the Job Commitment Bonus which will provide up to $6,500 to eligible job seekers if they get and keep a job for 24 months and remain off income support. Unemployed Australians who move to take up a job will benefit from the new Relocation Assistance which will provide up to $6,000 to eligible job seekers who relocate to a regional area, and up to $3,000 for eligible job seekers who relocate to a metropolitan area. Families with dependent children will also be eligible for up to a further $3,000 to meet the costs of relocating to take up a job. Older job seekers and employers will benefit from the Seniors Employment Incentive Payment which will provide up to $3,250 to employers to hire eligible workers 50 years of age or over.

The Government recognises that job creation needs to be matched by measures that ensure that job seekers have the skills employers need, which is why it has announced changes to employment services which commence in July 2015. These changes will reinvigorate employment services for job seekers and employers and deliver a system that is more responsive and focused on results. Combined with reforms to vocational education and training, job seekers will be work ready, ensuring that Australia's workforce is skilled and flexible.

Employment

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is the Minister aware that unemployment in the City of Hume, Melbourne, increased from 6.9 per cent in June 2013 to 10 per cent in June 2014.
(2) Is the Minister aware that since the 2013 change of government, unemployment in the City of Hume
suburb of Broadmeadows, has risen from 21.9 per cent to 26.4 per cent, and that unemployment in the City of Hume suburbs of Campbellfield and Coolaroo, has risen from 18.8 per cent to 22.9 per cent, and that unemployment in the City of Hume suburb of Meadow Heights, has risen from 18.6 per cent to 22.9 per cent.

(3) What action is the Government taking to reverse the rising trend in unemployment in the City of Hume.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) and (2). Yes. The Minister can also advise that he has not received any representations from the Honourable Member on this matter.

The Minister also notes that while historical Small Area Labour Market data at the LGA level are only available back to December 2012, the unemployment rate in the ABS Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) of Melbourne – North West (the SA4 within which the City of Hume falls) rose from 3.9 per cent in November 2007 to 7.0 per cent in September 2013, before remaining steady over the period to October 2014. It is noted that the Honourable Member did not express any concern for the doubling of the unemployment rate under the government of which he was a member.

(3). It is clear that some Australian regions are currently experiencing difficult labour market conditions, which is why the Government will be increasing employment opportunities right across the country by:

- rolling out the nation's biggest infrastructure program to strengthen the economy and create thousands of jobs;
- implementing free-trade agreements with China, Korea and Japan, which will add billions to the economy, create jobs and drive higher living standards for Australians;
- returning the budget to surplus to support a positive investment climate;
- abolishing the Carbon Tax and Mining Tax;
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- streamlining environmental approvals and removing unnecessary green tape.

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The Government recognises that job creation needs to be matched by measures that ensure that job seekers have the skills employers need, which is why it has announced changes to employment services which commence in July 2015. These changes will reinvigorate employment services for job seekers and employers and deliver a system that is more responsive and focused on results. Combined with reforms to vocational education and training, job seekers will be work ready, ensuring that Australia's workforce is skilled and flexible.

Employment

(Question Nos 588 and 590)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:
(1) Is the Minister aware that unemployment in Melbourne's inner north is now higher in some cases than the unemployment crisis facing Europe, with unemployment as of January 2014 in (a) Greece at 27.2 per cent, and (b) Spain at 24.5 per cent.

(2) Is the Minister aware that as of July 2014, unemployment across the Eurozone was 11.5 per cent.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Please refer to Question on Notice 575.

Wills and Calwell Electorates: Manufacturing
(Question No. 591)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

Is the Minister aware that the communities in the electoral divisions of Wills and Calwell are yet to absorb the full effects of the hollowing out of the local manufacturing base, as a result of the Government's decision to abandon manufacturing, particularly through the closure of Ford Australia's manufacturing plant in Broadmeadows.

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The premise of the question by the Member for Wills is false.

The Members for Willis and Calwell supported the Carbon Tax and Labor's economic policies that led to a number of companies in Australia finding that it was no longer economically viable and competitive to do business in Australia.

Furthermore, in 2012 the previous government announced a new subsidy to Holden, which it claimed would 'guarantee' its operations until 2022. This 'guarantee', of course, proved to be illusory. I also note the comments by senior General Motors management that the company would not have continued Holden's manufacturing operations in Australia, regardless of how much Government funding was provided. The same is true of Ford. Toyota, of course, was seriously undermined by the AMWU's court action to prevent its employees from even considering changes to its enterprise agreement that would have enabled the company's Melbourne operations to become more efficient and competitive, without impacting on pay and conditions.

I also note recent media reports on 1 December 2014 on the previous Government's automotive "assistance" policies, which stated that:

"The true scale of the former Rudd Government's waste in supporting the collapsing Australian car manufacturing industry is revealed with new figures showing taxpayers funded almost a third of the cost of each four-cylinder Ford Falcon.

"In 2009, $42 million of taxpayer money was pumped into the four-cylinder Falcon and two other fuel-efficient Ford vehicles under the $500 million "Green Car Innovation Fund".

"The four-cylinder Falcon has effectively received a subsidy of almost $8000 on each $37,000 vehicle—or $11,600 on each car bought by private buyers and businesses if you exclude Ford's company car fleet."

Wills and Calwell Electorates: Manufacturing
(Question No. 593)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Industry and Science, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

Is the Minister aware that the communities in the electoral divisions of Wills and Calwell are yet to absorb the full effects of the hollowing out of the local manufacturing base, as a result of the
Government's decision to abandon manufacturing, particularly through the closure of Ford Australia's manufacturing plant in Broadmeadows?

**Mr Ian Macfarlane:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Australian Government has not abandoned manufacturing but believes that in order for Australian manufacturing to compete effectively, they must transition to higher value-added products and access global value chains.

The Australian Government has been working with the Victorian Government to assist manufacturing firms in the regions affected by structural change, in particular through the $24.5 million Melbourne's North Innovation and Investment Fund. The programme will support sustainable investment by businesses, including manufacturing firms, leading directly to new sustainable jobs in Melbourne's North and to assist the region to diversify its economic base.

This is complemented by the $155 million Growth Fund, which includes the $60 million Next Generation Manufacturing Investment Programme (NGMIP). NGMIP supports capital investment by firms in areas of high value manufacturing in Victoria and South Australia, as well as enabling the firms to build scale and expand into new or growing markets.

**North Melbourne Regional Development Australia Report: Manufacturing**

(Question No. 594)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is the Minister aware that according to the 2012 North Melbourne Regional Development Australia report Manufacturing in Melbourne's North: Now and into the Future, manufacturing is still the largest regional employer in Melbourne's north, employing 53,160 workers across the region, followed by health/social assistance with 48,791 workers, retail with 42,188 workers and education with 33,707 workers, totalling 382,967 workers in the region.

(2) Is the Minister aware of modelling by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) contained in the report, that forecast that the closure of the Ford Australia factory would result in 16,000 jobs being lost throughout Victoria after just one year.

(3) Is the Minister aware that NIEIR forecast that after one year, (a) 600 jobs would be lost in the City of Moreland, and (b) 1,600 jobs would be lost in the City of Hume.

(4) Is the Minister aware that the most strategically important and largest manufacturing industries in North Melbourne are (a) automotive (8,696 employees), (b) food (8,514 employees), and (c) chemicals (6,267 employees).

(5) Is the Minister aware that the latest Census Data shows that 5,911 people who live in the electoral division of Wills are employed in manufacturing, which accounts for 8 per cent of total employment locally, and that in the electoral division of Calwell there are 9,185 people employed in manufacturing, which accounts for 14 per cent of employment locally.

(6) What industry, re-skilling, and job opportunities will the Government invest in to help regenerate the local economy and job market in Melbourne's Northern Suburbs.

**Mr Pyne:** The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The Australian Government is aware of the report and the challenges being faced in North Melbourne and other regions affected by structural change. Transitioning from heavy industrial manufacturing to higher value added production calls for a national, strategic response rather than a piecemeal response based on hand-outs and subsidies.

In this respect, it should be noted that in 2012 the previous government announced a new subsidy to Holden, which it claimed would 'guarantee' its operations until 2022. This 'guarantee', of course, proved
to be illusory. I also note the comments by senior General Motors management that the company would not have continued Holden’s manufacturing operations in Australia, regardless of how much Government funding was provided. The same is true of Ford. Toyota, of course, was seriously undermined by the AMWU’s court action to prevent its employees from even considering changes to its enterprise agreement that would have enabled the company’s Melbourne operations to become more efficient and competitive, without impacting on pay and conditions.

I also note recent media reports on 1 December 2014 on the previous Government’s automotive “assistance” policies, which stated that:

"The true scale of the former Rudd Government’s waste in supporting the collapsing Australian car manufacturing industry is revealed with new figures showing taxpayers funded almost a third of the cost of each four-cylinder Ford Falcon.

"In 2009, $42 million of taxpayer money was pumped into the four-cylinder Falcon and two other fuel-efficient Ford vehicles under the $500 million "Green Car Innovation Fund".

"The four-cylinder Falcon has effectively received a subsidy of almost $8000 on each $37,000 vehicle — or $11,600 on each car bought by private buyers and businesses if you exclude Ford's company car fleet."

The Government understands the considerable impact the exits of Ford, Holden and Toyota will have on the region. That is why the Government announced a $155 million Growth Fund that supports initiatives to assist workers transition to new jobs, businesses find new markets and invest in capital equipment, and regions invest in infrastructure projects.

The Government is committed to helping more people into employment and provides a range of employment programmes and incentives to help job seekers get and keep a job including employment support available through Job Services Australia.

**North Melbourne Regional Development Australia Report: Manufacturing**  
(Question No. 596)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Industry and Science, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is the Minister aware that according to the 2012 North Melbourne Regional Development Australia report Manufacturing in Melbourne's North: Now and into the Future, manufacturing is still the largest regional employer in Melbourne's north, employing 53,160 workers across the region, followed by health/social assistance with 48,791 workers, retail with 42,188 workers and education with 33,707 workers, totalling 382,967 workers in the region.

(2) Is the Minister aware of modelling by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) contained in the report, that forecast that the closure of the Ford Australia factory would result in 16,000 jobs being lost throughout Victoria after just one year.

(3) Is the Minister aware that NIEIR forecast that after one year, (a) 600 jobs would be lost in the City of Moreland, and (b) 1,600 jobs would be lost in the City of Hume.

(4) Is the Minister aware that the most strategically important and largest manufacturing industries in North Melbourne are (a) automotive (8,696 employees), (b) food (8,514 employees), and (c) chemicals (6,267 employees).

(5) Is the Minister aware that the latest Census Data shows that 5,911 people who live in the electoral division of Wills are employed in manufacturing, which accounts for 8 per cent of total employment locally, and that in the electoral division of Calwell there are 9,185 people employed in manufacturing, which accounts for 14 per cent of employment locally.
(6) What industry, re-skilling, and job opportunities will the Government invest in to help regenerate the local economy and job market in Melbourne's Northern Suburbs.

**Mr Ian Macfarlane:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Government is aware of the report on manufacturing in Melbourne's North and the challenges being faced in North Melbourne and other regions affected by structural change. The Government is also aware of the Census data on the share of manufacturing employment for the electorates of Wills and Calwell.

In relation to reskilling opportunities, the Government has in place a $476 million Industry Skills Fund (ISF) to address Australia's skills demand and that will help Australian businesses access training so that they are better placed to succeed in a rapidly changing economy.

It will deliver 200,000 training places and training support services over four years, starting in January 2015.

The Fund targets Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), including micro businesses (0 to 4 employees), which plan to up-skill and re-skill their workforces to better position themselves for growth opportunities.

**Migrant worker programs**

(Question No. 597)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is Australia now running record high migrant worker programs, including the Skilled Migration program, growing from 125,755 places in 2011-12 to 128,973 places in 2012-13. (2) Is it a fact that the Skilled Migration program is now more than five times the size it was in 1995-96 when it had 24,100 workers.

**Mr Pyne:** The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable Member’s question:

(1) The figures quoted are an accurate reflection of the figures contained in the reports for 2011-12 and 2012-13. It is noted that the Rudd/Gillard/Rudd Governments were in office during this time.

(2) Yes. This reflects the growth over time in the Australian economy.

**Migration**

(Question No. 599)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Industry and Science, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is Australia now running record high migrant worker programs, including the Skilled Migration program, growing from 125,755 places in 2011-12 to 128,973 places in 2012-13.

(2) Is it a fact that the Skilled Migration program is now more than five times the size it was in 1995-96 when it had 24,100 workers.

**Mr Ian Macfarlane:** The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The question does not fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Industry.

**457 Visas**

(Question No. 600)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

(1) Is the Minister aware that according to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's State and Territory Migration Summary Report (March 2014), Victoria absorbed the second largest proportion of 457 visa grants in the first three quarters of 2013-14, with 23 per cent or 17,432 people.

(2) Is it a fact that for the first three quarters in 2012-13, the largest changes for 457 visas amounted to a 38.3 per cent decline (7,999 less people) for Western Australia, and a 30.2 per cent decline for Queensland (4,978 less people).

(3) Is it a fact that many more migrant workers are coming to Victoria than to the mining states of Queensland and Western Australia.

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(1) The Minister is aware of the Report.

(2) The estimates provided by Mr Thomson are from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's State and Territory Migration Summary Report (March 2014). These estimates include both primary (employer-sponsored) and secondary (spouse and dependent) Subclass 457 visa holders.

(3) The highest number of Subclass 457 visas granted in the first nine months of 2013–14 was for New South Wales. Each state experienced a decline in the number of visas granted compared with the corresponding period for 2012–13.

Migration

(Question No. 602)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Industry and Science, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is the Minister aware that according to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's State and Territory Migration Summary Report (March 2014), Victoria absorbed the second largest proportion of 457 visa grants in the first three quarters of 2013-14, with 23 per cent or 17,432 people.

(2) Is it a fact that for the first three quarters in 2012-13, the largest changes for 457 visas amounted to a 38.3 per cent decline (7,999 less people) for Western Australia, and a 30.2 per cent decline for Queensland (4,978 less people).

(3) Is it a fact that many more migrant workers are coming to Victoria than to the mining states of Queensland and Western Australia.

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The question does not fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Industry.

Victoria: Population Growth

(Question No. 603)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is the Minister aware that the latest Victorian Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure Victorian Population Bulletin shows that Victoria grew by a record 106,820 people between June 2012 and June 2013, which is a 1.9 per cent increase, higher than the 1.8 per cent national average. (2) Is the Minister aware that Victoria is absorbing a large proportion, 26.2 per cent, of Australia's overall population growth. (3) Is it a fact that for the year ending 30 June, Australia's population grew by 407,027, or 1.8 per cent to 23,135,281 people, and Victoria's population grew by 106,820 people. (4) Is the Minister aware that Greater Melbourne is absorbing the vast majority, 89.4 per cent, of Victoria's population growth. (5) Is the Minister aware that there are numerous Victorian local government areas that have grown by more than the 2.2 per cent average, including Melbourne.
(10.5 per cent/11,029 people), Wyndham (6 per cent/10,759 people), Whittlesea (5.5 per cent/9,306 people), Cardinia (4.8 per cent/3,877 people), Melton (4.3 per cent/5,028 people), Yarra (3.2 per cent/2,606 people), Maribyrnong (3.2 per cent/2,436 people), Hume (2.9 per cent/5,229 people), Casey (2.8 per cent/3,877 people), and Moreland (2.2 per cent/3,372).

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The data in the Victorian Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure Victorian Population Bulletin are sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This question should be directed to the Treasurer.

Population
(Question No. 605)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Industry and Science, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is the Minister aware that the latest Victorian Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure Victorian Population Bulletin shows that Victoria grew by a record 106,820 people between June 2012 and June 2013, which is a 1.9 per cent increase, higher than the 1.8 per cent national average.

(2) Is the Minister aware that Victoria is absorbing a large proportion, 26.2 per cent, of Australia's overall population growth.

(3) Is it a fact that for the year ending 30 June, Australia's population grew by 407,027, or 1.8 per cent to 23,135,281 people, and Victoria's population grew by 106,820 people.

(4) Is the Minister aware that Greater Melbourne is absorbing the vast majority, 89.4 per cent, of Victoria's population growth.

(5) Is the Minister aware that there are numerous Victorian local government areas that have grown by more than the 2.2 per cent average, including Melbourne (10.5 per cent/11,029 people), Wyndham (6 per cent/10,759 people), Whittlesea (5.5 per cent/9,306 people), Cardinia (4.8 per cent/3,877 people), Melton (4.3 per cent/5,028 people), Yarra (3.2 per cent/2,606 people), Maribyrnong (3.2 per cent/2,436 people), Hume (2.9 per cent/5,229 people), Casey (2.8 per cent/3,877 people), and Moreland (2.2 per cent/3,372).

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) Yes, the figures quoted are from the Victorian Population Bulletin 2014. The publication states that absolute growth was higher in 2008-09 (115,600 people).

(2) Yes, the figures quoted are from the Victorian Population Bulletin 2014.

(3) The figures quoted are from the Victorian Population Bulletin 2014, the latest available as at 27 March 2014. These have since been revised slightly as more accurate figures have become available. The latest ABS data (released 25 September 2014) for year ending 30 June 2013 shows Australia's population grew by 401,045, or 1.8 per cent to 23,129,299 people, and Victoria's population grew by 104,151.

(4) Yes, the figures quoted are from the Victorian Population Bulletin 2014.

(5) Yes, the figures quoted are from the Victorian Population Bulletin 2014. The publication states that the Victorian local government area of Casey increased by 7,476 people, rather than by 3,877 people as stated in the question.
Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

Is the Minister aware of the report by John Masanauskas, "Unemployment in Melbourne suburbs will be a social disaster, says researcher" (Herald Sun, 29 October 2011), that Dr Bob Birrell from the Monash University's Centre for Population and Urban Research stated that the unemployment figures were disturbingly being concentrated in areas where many young people with limited education were looking for work, and having to compete with very large numbers of temporary migrants; if so, what is the Government doing to address the integration of young people in such neighbourhoods.

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

Yes.

Rather than the borderline xenophobic approach taken by the former Rudd/Gillard/Rudd Governments, supported by the Honourable Member, towards foreign workers, this Government is focused on creating more job opportunities for Australian workers.

A key example of the Government's job creation agenda is the Free Trade Agreements with Korea, Japan and China finalised by the Coalition Government which will create new export markets for Australian businesses with huge tariff reductions.

I firmly encourage the Honourable Member to support the Government's positive Economic Action Strategy.

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is the Minister aware of the statement made by Sir Robert Menzies on 2 October 1964 at the opening of the Chrysler Manufacturing Centre in Tonsley Park, South Australia, where he said that the manufacturing industry, providing large scale employment, has enabled migration programs to continue, and in turn, given confidence to other industries that benefit from the higher demand for goods and services resulting from annual population increases.

(2) Will the Minister consider developing a coordinated strategy (a) to ensure Australia's migration program, particularly the Skilled Migration program, does not reduce the opportunities for Australians to find work in this tough job market, and (b) that helps to regenerate manufacturing and industry in Australia, particularly in Melbourne's Northern Suburbs, in order to reduce local unemployment and improve social cohesion.

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(1) I am well aware of the public speeches and contributions to Australia of Australia's longest serving Prime Minister. The Government hopes that the Honourable Member might learn something from reading Sir Robert Menzies' speeches.

(2) (a) The focus of Australia's migration programmes has changed over time and current policy balances the contribution of skilled migration to the workforce and economic productivity, with Australia's social, humanitarian and international obligations.

The Government fully supports the principle of Australians first in the local labour market.
(b) The Government is committed to creating jobs by building a strong and productive economy. The Government will make it easier for businesses to take advantage of opportunities through concluding new Free Trade Agreements with Korea, Japan and China, cutting $1 billion in red and green tape costs every year and by establishing a one-stop-shop for environmental approval.

**Employment**

(Question No. 611)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Industry and Science, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is the Minister aware of the statement made by Sir Robert Menzies on 2 October 1964 at the opening of the Chrysler Manufacturing Centre in Tonsley Park, South Australia, where he said that the manufacturing industry, providing large scale employment, has enabled migration programs to continue, and in turn, given confidence to other industries that benefit from the higher demand for goods and services resulting from annual population increases.

(2) Will the Minister consider developing a coordinated strategy (a) to ensure Australia’s migration program, particularly the Skilled Migration program, does not reduce the opportunities for Australians to find work in this tough job market, and (b) that helps to regenerate manufacturing and industry in Australia, particularly in Melbourne’s Northern Suburbs, in order to reduce local unemployment and improve social cohesion.

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(1) The Government is aware of the references made in the speech by Sir Robert Menzies.

(2) (a) This is not a matter for the Minister for Industry and Science.

(b) The Government has programmes in place to support Australia's manufacturing industry, including those in Melbourne's northern suburbs. These initiatives include the Entrepreneurs Infrastructure Programme, Industry Growth Centres, Industry Skills Fund, Manufacturing Transition Programme and the Growth Fund. These initiatives will assist workers and communities through opportunities arising from new investments.

Of particular note is the $24.5 million Melbourne's North Innovation and Investment Fund (the Fund), which has the objective of supporting sustainable investment by business, including manufacturing firms, leading directly to new sustainable jobs in Melbourne's North and to assist the region to diversify its economic base.

The Fund is a product of a partnership between the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments and the private sector to help Melbourne's north to secure a strong manufacturing presence.

As at the end of November 2014, 15 grants worth $17.6 million have been allocated under the Fund. They have leveraged $91.8 million in private sector investment and are expected to create more than 421 new full-time equivalent jobs.

**Employment**

(Question No. 612)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

Will the Minister consider attending a forum on the issues of economic growth, manufacturing, unemployment and job creation in 2015 should I arrange one; if so, what dates or timeframes would suit.

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

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QUESTIONS IN WRITING
There are 19 Parliamentary sitting weeks in 2015. If the Honourable Minister can find it within him to support policies in the Parliament that promote economic growth, policies to reduce unemployment and that support job creation, a request will be considered.

That said, it is noted that the Hon. Member opposed the repeal of the Carbon Tax, Mining Tax, Economic Action Strategy and other job creating policies.

**Employment**

(Question No. 614)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Industry and Science, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

Will the Minister consider attending a forum on the issues of economic growth, manufacturing, unemployment and job creation in 2015 should I arrange one; if so, what dates or timeframes would suit.

**Mr Ian Macfarlane:** The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Requests for meetings, or my attendance at events, should be put in writing to: minister.invitations@industry.gov.au.

**Finance and Deregulation: Staff Travel**

(Question No. 615)

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) In respect of the cabinet meeting held in Melbourne on Tuesday, 19 August 2014, what was the total cost of flights for (a) Ministers, and (b) ministerial staff.

(2) Did any (a) Ministers, and (b) ministerial staff, travel in business class; if so, how many.

(3) What was the total cost of (a) travel allowance, and (b) ground transport, for (i) Ministers, and (ii) ministerial staff.

**Mr Hockey:** The Minister for Finance has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) (a) $2,431.10

(b) $1,376.69

(2) Yes, the Minister for Finance and one ministerial staff member travelled in business class.

(3) (a) (i) $432.00

(ii) $362.00

(b) (i) $156.21

(ii) $149.00

**Barmah National Park: River Red Gum Logging**

(Question No. 618)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is he aware that Victoria has abandoned the proposed joint New South Wales and Victorian River Red Gum logging trial in the Barmah National Park.

(2) Will he now allow the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 approval process for the trial to continue, or will he consider refusing the trial.
Mr Hunt: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) While I am aware of media reports suggesting the Victorian Government does not intend to proceed with the proposed trial, I have not received any formal advice of this from either the New South Wales or Victorian Governments.

(2) In the absence of formal advice from the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage and/or the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 assessment remains active.

Chevron Scheme
(Question No. 619)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is he aware of a report by Georgia Wilkins 'ATO alleges complex Chevron scheme slashed tax bill by $258m' (The Age, 9 October 2014) that Chevron created an entity in Delaware, United States, for the sole purpose of lending money to its Australian subsidiary in order to avoid tax.

(2) Is he aware that the process is alleged to have netted Chevron up to $862 million in tax free dividends over five years.

(3) Is he aware that the Tax Justice Network (TJN) estimates that up to $80 billion in tax payments has been avoided by the biggest 200 stock market-listed companies over the past ten years due to tax minimisation strategies.

(4) Is he aware that TJN representative Dr Mark Zirnsak has stated that artificial debt loading was a 'significant form of tax avoidance globally' and that the Chevron case highlights the need for Australia to be part of the work that the OECD is doing to address this particular type of tax avoidance.

(5) What action is the Australian Government taking, either directly or through international channels such as the OECD and the G20, to crack down on tax avoidance through the use of artificial debt loading.

Mr Hockey: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) Chevron case.

The Treasury will continue to monitor the progress of the Chevron case.

(3) and (4) Tax Justice Network report.

The Tax Justice Network's estimate of the revenue lost to tax avoidance by the ASX 200 companies is flawed. The report uses the amount of company tax paid as a percentage of accounting profit to calculate the effective tax rate and compares it to the statutory corporate tax rate of 30 per cent. Taxes are not applied to accounting profit but to taxable income. There are significant and intended differences between accounting profit and taxable income, such as the treatment of capital gains and losses, recognition of foreign income, and treatment of franking credits. These differences mean that an analysis of the effective tax rate using accounting profits is misleading.

(5) Australian Government action to address tax avoidance through the use of artificial debt loading.

Australia has a robust set of domestic laws in place to deal with tax avoidance by multinational companies, including comprehensive controlled foreign company and thin capitalisation regimes, tough transfer pricing rules and a general anti-avoidance rule.

The Parliament recently passed two laws to further respond to integrity issues in the corporate tax system which address profit shifting through the use of debt in Australia. These changes involve:

- Tightening and improving the thin capitalisation rules with effect from 1 July 2014, in particular by reducing all safe harbour limits to bring them more closely into line with commercial debt levels or
to regulatory requirements in the case of banks. This will reduce the ability for multinational taxpayers to claim excessive debt deductions in Australia.

- Changes to the exemption for foreign non-portfolio dividends. This will remove a significant tax planning opportunity that has arisen from a flaw in the current tax laws. This flaw has allowed multinational taxpayers to claim a tax exemption for interest income from loans to offshore subsidiaries, whereas this income should be assessable. The flaw has also undermined the efficacy of the thin capitalisation rules by allowing unconstrained amounts of debt to be allocated to Australia.

Governments around the world are co-ordinating their efforts to address tax avoidance in the form of tax base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) by multinationals. Australia is a member of the OECD and the G20, which are working together on strategies to address tax avoidance and evasion.

As G20 President in 2014, Australia played a leading role in international discussions regarding BEPS. At the recent meeting of G20 Leaders in Brisbane, the G20 Leaders welcomed the significant progress achieved to date on an Action Plan to address BEPS. The Action Plan will be finalised by December 2015.

**Education: Student Attendance**

(Question No. 620)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Education and Training, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

What was the rate of attendance in (a) primary, and (b) secondary, schools for (i) each year level in each state and territory in the latest years for which records are available, and (ii) the ten years leading up to 2012.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:


Student attendance rate information was not collected at a national level prior to 2007.

**Graduate Employment**

(Question Nos 623 and 625)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

(1) Is the Minister aware that young Australian graduates are experiencing unprecedented tough competition to find work in fields such as accounting.

(2) In an environment of high national unemployment, and shaky business and consumer confidence, will the Minister consider reviewing the Government's 'business as usual' approach in respect of Australia's overseas student and migrant worker programs.

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(1) I am aware that Graduate Careers Australia survey data shows that graduate outcomes have weakened in recent years, including for graduates of accounting studies.

(2) The Government has a comprehensive Economic Action Strategy to combat high unemployment and a lack of consumer confidence. Regrettably the Green Labor Alliance, including Mr Thomson, have opposed at every opportunity the Government's job creating policies.
If Mr Thomson was minded to stop continuing the economic vandalism from the Rudd/Gillard/Rudd Government, he may like to raise the Labor Party's opposition to all job creating policies with the Opposition Leader.

**Graduate Employment**

(Question No. 627)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

1. In respect of the Deakin University's Centre for Research in Educational Futures and Innovation's report Australian international graduates and the transition to employment (September 2014), is he aware that the findings illustrate that (a) the overseas student program needs to be reviewed by the Australian Government to provide greater opportunity for Australian graduates to find work domestically, (b) the graduate labour market in Australia in the three disciplines of nursing, engineering and accounting is very competitive, (c) the proportion of bachelor degree graduates employed within four months of completing their courses has fallen to 71.3 per cent, the lowest figure in over 20 years, and what action will the Minister take to address this issue, (d) shortages for engineers eased significantly in 2012-13 and are now limited to petroleum and mining engineers, and (e) a slowdown in the mining industry, as well as manufacturing, and subdued activity in construction, are contributing to a weak labour market.

2. Does the Minister accept the report's findings that employment outcomes for graduate engineers have weakened in recent years with softer market conditions, resulting in graduates competing for work with experienced engineers, with BHP, Rio Tinto and AECOM cutting their graduate intakes.

**Mr Pyne:** The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

1. The Government notes research from a wide and varying range of sources, including Deakin University's Centre for Research in Educational Futures and Innovation.

2. Softer demand from mining and manufacturing has contributed to greater applicant competition for vacancies for engineers over the past two years. That's why the Coalition Government is focused on building a stronger and more prosperous economy so that employers, such as those mentioned, have an economic environment where they can employ and take on additional employees. That's why Labor's proposal to further slow down the mining industry through its mining tax would have been utterly disastrous for jobs.

It is noted that the Honourable Member opposed the repeal of the Carbon Tax, opposed the repeal of the Mining Tax and is opposed to the Government's Economic Action Strategy.

**Employment: Accounting**

(Question No. 631)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

1. Will the Minister review the 2012-13 Australian Government Review of labour market demand, which found that there was no shortage of graduate accountants and that graduate employment outcomes for accounting bachelor degrees have fallen over the past five years. (2) Is the Minister aware that in 2012, 7,200 domestic students completed a bachelor or higher degree in accounting, with the Department of Employment declaring that 'more than adequate supply of accountants existed in Australia'. (3) Is the Minister aware (a) of reports that overall employment of accountants increased by just 1.3 per cent over the five years to May 2014, which was well below the 'all occupations' average of 7.4 per cent, and (b) that advertised vacancies for accountancy positions have also fallen since 2008.
Is the Minister aware of the recent media report by Edmund Tadros 'Accounting bodies do about-face on jobs for foreign students' (Australian Financial Review, 29 October 2014), claiming that the Australian Government says it will review the Skilled Occupations List early next year, and that based on the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency's recommendation, a reduced ceiling of approximately 5,000 places or 3 per cent of the domestic workforce, has been set for accountants in 2014-15. (5) Is it a fact that the Department of Employment has recommended that accountants be removed from the Skilled Occupations List, having concluded there is a surplus of accountants and 'deteriorating outcomes for graduates...relatively low pay rates for bachelor graduates and weak employment outcomes for masters graduates'; if so, and in light of the evidence from the academic research, media reporting and professional views, will the Minister consider removing accountants from the Skilled Occupations List. (6) In respect of a media report by Edmund Tadros and Agnes King 'Accounting Bodies do about-face on jobs for foreign students' (Australian Financial Review, 12 February 2014), is he aware (a) that in the past five years, 40,000 migrants have entered the country through accounting skilled stream, which is significantly higher than the numbers entering with other priority areas, (b) of data provided in this report that Graduate Careers Australia shows that 80 per cent of domestic accounting graduates were working full time four months after finishing their courses in 2012, compared with 93 per cent in 2001, (c) that the University of New South Wales (UNSW) had an almost record enrolment in first year accounting in 2014 with over 1,700 currently enrolled, and (d) that the UNSW's record for accounting enrolments was 1,800 in 2010. (7) Will the Minister acknowledge the suggestions in the Deakin University's Centre for Research in Educational Futures and Innovation's report Australian international graduates and the transition to employment (September 2014) and media report in part (6), that overseas accounting students are being lured to study accounting in Australia on the misleading impression that it is easy to find work experience, work opportunities and permanent residency in Australia. (8) Is the Minister aware of the findings in Deakin University's report in part (7), which showed that international accounting students were a major source of income for Australian Universities, making up a record 79 per cent of the 17,600 enrolled postgraduate students in 2013, and 55 per cent of the more than 24,500 enrolled undergraduate students.

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(1) No. The Review which the Honourable Member refers is out of date. The latest review of this labour market was undertaken in May 2014 and is published on the Department's website.

(2) The 2012 report includes this information. It is noted that in 2012, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP was the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations.

(3) ABS Labour Force Survey data show that employment of accountants rose by 13.7 per cent over the 5 years to May 2014, well above the all occupations average of 7.3 per cent. The Department's Internet Vacancy Index shows the level of advertised vacancies for accountants has fallen over the past five years.

(4) Portfolio responsibility for the Skilled Occupation List rests with the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection.


(6) The Department of Employment assesses the labour market for many skilled occupations and monitors commentary and information from a wide range of organisations and researchers.

(7) and (8). The Government is aware of information and research from a range of bodies, including Deakin University. While the Honourable Member may be under the misapprehension from the Rudd/Gillard/Rudd Governments that it is appropriate for media speculation or stakeholders such as
union bosses to drive government policy, it is not. This Government will carefully consider all research and act in the national interest, not sectional interests.

Employment
(Question Nos 634, 635 and 637)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

Is the Minister aware, as reported by John Masanauskas in "Unemployment in Melbourne suburbs will be "social disaster", says researcher" (Herald Sun, 29 October 2014), of evidence and reports that local young people, unemployed and workers would be better off and have a better chance of being trained and getting a job with fewer overseas migrant workers and students.

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

Unemployment is bad for social, mental and physical health not just for the individual but for the household and the community. That's why the Government is so focused on creating a stronger economic environment where more job opportunities are created.

It is noted that the unemployment rate in honourable member's local area almost doubled while Labor was in office yet he supported the job destroying Carbon Tax and Mining Tax which discouraged investment in jobs.

Instead of trying to recast the jobs in the current jobs in the community as suggested by the question, the Government is focused on creating more job opportunities. Regrettably these attempts have been opposed at every step by Mr Thomson and his Labor/Green colleagues.

Employment
(Question Nos 638, 639 and 641)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

Is the Minister aware of the views of Dr Bob Birrell from Monash University's Centre for Population and Urban Research, as reported by Edmund Tadros in "Accounting bodies do about-face on jobs for foreign students" (Australian Financial Review, 29 October 2014), that the unemployment figures for Melbourne's north are being compounded by the fact that local unemployed people are currently competing with over one million temporary migrants with working rights visas in Australia, for the same occupations.

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

As previously indicated on several occasions to the Honourable Member, the Government is aware of both the newspaper report and the report from Monash University.

Unlike the former Rudd/Gillard/Rudd Governments, of which Mr Thomson was a member, this Government is not in the business of overreacting to media reports. Instead, the Government carefully considers the facts and pursues policies that are in the national interest.

Employment
(Question Nos 642, 643 and 645)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:
Will the Government consider cutting the permanent worker program to previous levels of around 25,000 per annum, in the context of reducing unacceptably high unemployment figures in Melbourne's north west.

Mr Pyne: The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The focus of Australia's migration programmes has changed over time and current policy balances the contribution of skilled migration to the workforce and economic productivity, with Australia's social, humanitarian and international obligations.

The Government has a comprehensive Economic Action Strategy which will create more job opportunities for Australians. Regrettably, the Government's positive agenda has been rejected at every turn by Mr Thomson and his colleagues in the Green Labor Alliance.

Drought Concessional Loans Scheme
(Question No. 661)

Mr Fitzgibbon asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 24 November 2014:

In respect of him hoping to announce an additional $100 million for drought specific concessional loans, (a) when will he announce the additional funding, (b) which states and territories will be eligible, (c) has he exchanged letters with the Treasurer's office agreeing to the extra funding, (d) what criteria have been agreed to, and (e) have the guidelines for drought specific concessional loans been approved; if so, on what date.

Mr Joyce: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) On 4 December 2014, I announced $100 million in funding for the Drought Recovery Concessional Loans Scheme.

(b) Farm businesses in Queensland and New South Wales will be eligible to apply.

(c) No, however, the appropriate Australian Government approval processes have been followed.

(d) The scheme will provide loans of up to 50 per cent of a farm business's total eligible debt to a maximum of up to $1 million over a loan term of up to 10 years for planting and restocking activities as seasonal conditions allow. The loans will have a concessional variable interest rate, initially set at 3.21 per cent, and interest-only repayments for the first five years. In Queensland and New South Wales, the loans will be available for farm businesses that have experienced a rainfall deficiency equivalent to, or worse than, either a 1 in 50 year or 1 in 100 year rainfall event. In Queensland, the loans will also be available for farm businesses that have experienced a rainfall deficiency equivalent to, or worse than, either a 1 in 10 year or 1 in 20 year rainfall event and that were directly involved in the consignment of live cattle to the export trade to Indonesia in at least two of the three financial years prior to 1 July 2011. The complete loan eligibility and loan assessment criteria will be in the scheme guidelines.

(e) No.

Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program
(Question No. 662)

Ms Bird asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 24 November 2014:

In respect of the announcement on 1 March 2013 of joint state and Commonwealth funding of approximately $8 million ($4,045,000 each) under the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program for the upgrade of the existing truck stop at Mt Ousley Road, Mt Keira (northbound) in the electoral division of Cunningham, (a) will he provide a progress report on the work being conducted, and (b) by what date will this work be completed.
Mr Truss: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) The NSW Government is undertaking planning work for this project.

(b) The NSW Government has advised that dates for construction commencement and completion are not yet known and will be determined once the above mentioned planning is complete.

**Ballast Rehabilitation Program**

(Question No. 663)

Ms McGowan asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 24 November 2014:

(1) Is it intended that the Ballast Rehabilitation Program (BRP), when completed, will result in high quality track conditions reflecting the goals of the North East Rail Revitalisation Project (NERRP).

(2) Is it intended that the BRP, upon completion, will (a) enable passenger trains like the New South Wales CountryLink XPT to travel at 130 kilometres per hour to 160 kilometres per hour on the Melbourne to Albury rail line as they are able to do on other parts of the rail network, and (b) reduce typical journey times for passenger and freight train services; if so, is it anticipated that they will be shorter than typical journey times on the line prior to the NERRP.

(3) In the design phase of the NERRP, did the Australian Rail Track Corporation anticipate a reduction in passenger and freight train journey times on the Melbourne to Albury rail line, not including time savings as a result of the Wodonga Rail Bypass.

(4) What contingency plans are in place should, at the completion of the BRP, train service reliability and journey times remain affected by poor track conditions.

Mr Truss: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) The Ballast Rehabilitation Program does not relate to the North East Rail Revitalisation Project. The North East Rail Revitalisation Project was a programme of works aimed at improving passenger and freight rail services between Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga by removing the rail line from the centre of Wodonga and converting 200-kilometres of broad gauge track to standard gauge. The North East Rail Revitalisation Project was jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments, and the Australian Rail Track Corporation and completed in 2011.

The Australian Rail Track Corporation's $134 million Ballast Rehabilitation Program is a five year programme to improve track condition and reduce temporary speed restrictions caused by poor track formation predating the Australian Rail Track Corporation's involvement in the line. This work involves cleaning fouled ballast and improving track drainage and is scheduled to be completed in 2016.

(2) (a) The New South Wales CountryLink XPT currently operates at 130 kilometres per hour in Victoria and freight services operate at 115 kilometres per hour, subject to curves, loading and gradient of the track. Passenger service speeds of 160 kilometres per hour are prevented by conflicts such as level crossings, sighting distances and signalling design. The lease agreement for Victoria does not require services to operate at these speeds nor have tracks been designed with this intention.

(b) The Ballast Rehabilitation Program will improve train transit times as temporary speed restrictions are lifted. Once complete, the Ballast Rehabilitation Program will allow services to operate at the speeds the track is designed for.

(3) No. The Australian Rail Track Corporation did not undertake the design of the North East Rail Revitalisation Project. The North East Rail Revitalisation Project was a programme of works to upgrade track to operating standards agreed with the Victorian Government as a condition of the extension to the Victorian rail lease in 2008. Benefits delivered by the Wodonga bypass were integrated into subsequent timetabling of services.
(4) ARTC is scheduled to complete the Ballast Rehabilitation Program in 2016. Under the Ballast Rehabilitation Program, track conditions in the North South corridor have been steadily improving. For example, V/Line punctuality performance has been maintained above 93% in recent months, exceeding the Victorian Government target of 92%. It is also much higher than corresponding performance of recent years, i.e. 82.5% in November 2013. Once the Ballast Rehabilitation Program is complete, the Australian Rail Track Corporation’s ongoing maintenance programme will ensure track quality is maintained to the standard of any other section of the interstate network. While improved track conditions will allow the Australian Rail Track Corporation to offer V/Line faster transit times, the responsibility for the scheduling, timing and operation of V/Line services resides with Victorian Government.

**National Broadband Network**

(Question No. 664)

Ms McGowan asked the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 24 November 2014:

1. What is the commencement date for the NBN Co Limited Long Term Satellite Service (LTSS).
2. In respect of some households in regional areas such as the electoral division of Indi, currently only able to access broadband internet via the 3G mobile network: 
   a) When does the NBN Co Limited plan to inform them of the type of National Broadband Network (NBN) service they will be offered and the expected commencement date for that service; and 
   b) Is it intended that they will be able to access the LTSS from its commencement if the NBN Co Limited does not plan to offer a fixed line or fixed wireless service to them.

**Mr Turnbull:** The answer to the member’s question is as follows:

1. As part of its long term satellite service, NBN Co will deploy two Ka-band satellites to provide NBN access for those outside the fixed line and wireless footprints. The first of these satellites is expected to be in operation by early 2016.
2. (a) On 1 December 2014, NBN Co released its new National Rollout Plan which provides information on the new work underway to bring fast broadband to the next cities, towns and suburbs by June 2016. NBN Co is committed to providing quarterly updates of planned activity across Australia to capture any changes to the schedule identified through process and technology improvements or variations in the rollout on its website www.nbnco.com.au.
   (b) NBN Co will manage a number of competing interests around the Satellite service to ensure service quality and availability. Both new users and current users of the Interim Satellite Service will be able to progressively access the LTSS when it commences.

**Japanese Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishing**

(Question No. 668)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 25 November 2014:

1. Is he aware of evidence to the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna that Japan's fishing fleet killed more than 3000 albatrosses and petrels in 2013.
2. Is it a fact that this is an increase of 300 per cent on 2012; if not, what is the correct figure.
3. What steps will he take to urge Japan to have its fishing fleet adopt preventive measures to reduce the incidence of albatross and petrel deaths.

**Mr Hunt:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

1. I am aware there has been media reporting stating that Japan's fleet fishing in the area in which southern bluefin tuna is encountered killed more than 3000 seabirds in 2013. This figure is inaccurate. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, who has responsibility for Australia's
engagement in the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), and other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), has informed me that Japan's annual report to the 21st Annual Meeting of the CCSBT (Auckland, 13-16 October 2014) indicates there were 337 seabird mortalities in 2013, of which 316 were albatrosses and petrels.

(2) Japan's annual report to the 21st Annual Meeting of the CCSBT indicates that albatross and petrel mortalities increased by approximately 400 per cent between 2012 and 2013—from 78 to 316 mortalities.

(3) Australia continues to engage bilaterally, and where appropriate, through CCAMLR and relevant RFMOs to which Australia and Japan are parties, to encourage Japan to adopt measures to reduce the incidence of albatross and petrel deaths. Australia has a long-standing commitment to mitigating incidental harm to seabirds including albatrosses and petrels, caused by fishing activities. Australia is a leading proponent within the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels in establishing and applying best practice guidelines for mitigating bycatch of seabirds in global fisheries. Australia has proposed or supported binding resolutions or measures on seabird bycatch mitigation in the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), and each of the RFMOs to which Australia is a party. At the 21st Annual Meeting of the CCSBT, Australia proposed a binding resolution to mitigate the impact on seabirds of fishing for southern bluefin tuna, noting that the CCSBT remains the only tuna RFMO without a comprehensive set of binding measures on these species. As a consensus-based organisation, the lack of support from Japan and Taiwan ensured the resolution was not adopted.

**Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System**

(Question No. 669)

Mr Fitzgibbon to ask the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 25 November 2014:

In respect of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System review report, (a) when will it be released, (b) how many submissions were received, (c) did he personally write to organisations inviting them to provide a submission; if so, (i) which organisations, and (ii) were other organisations allowed to make a submission; if not, why not, and (d) will it be made available for public consultation.

Mr Joyce: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) The report is expected to be released in 2015.
(b) 36
(c) Yes
   (i) The following individuals and organisation were invited to make submissions:
      AgForce
      A H and R Schmidt Pty Ltd
      Animals Australia
      Australian Buffalo Industry Council
      Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association
      Australian Livestock Exporters' Council
      Australian Lot Feeders Association
      Australian Rural Exports Pty Ltd
      Australian Veterinary Association
      Capricorn Pastoral
      Cattle Council of Australia
Edwards Livestock Company Pty Ltd
Emanuel Exports Pty Ltd
EMS Rural Exports Pty Ltd
Goat Industry Council of Australia
Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain
Government of Brunei Darussalam
Government of the Republic of Indonesia
Government of the State of Israel
Government of Japan
Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Government of Kuwait
Government of Malaysia
Government of the Republic of Mauritius
Government of the Sultanate of Oman
Government of the Republic of the Philippines
Government of Qatar
Government of the Republic of Singapore
Government of Turkey
Government of the United Arab Emirates
Government of Vietnam
Halleen Australasian Livestock Traders Pty Ltd
Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Minister for Primary Industries and Water (Tasmania)
Hon. John McVeigh MP, Minister for Agriculture (Queensland)
Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson MP, Minister for Primary Industries (New South Wales)
Hon. Ken Baston MLC, Minister for Agriculture and Food (Western Australia)
Hon. Leon Bignell MP, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (South Australia)
Hon. Peter Walsh MP, Minister for Agriculture and Food Security (Victoria)
Hon. Willem Rudolf Westra van Holthe MLA, Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries (Northern Territory)
Independent Livestock Services Pty Ltd
International Livestock Export Pty Ltd
Kennedy Creek Livestock
Lembiru Livestock Pty Ltd
LiveCorp
Livestock SA
Livestock Shipping Services Pty Ltd
Meat and Livestock Australia
Mr Harold Mitchell
National Farmers Federation
North Australian Cattle Company Pty Ltd

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association
Northern Territory Livestock Exporters Association
New South Wales Farmers Association
P & D Exports Pty Ltd
Pastoralist and Graziers Association of WA (Western Beef and Sheep Producers Committee)
Queensland Farmers Association
RSPCA Australia
Sheepmeat Council of Australia
South East Asian Livestock Services Pty Ltd
Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association
Victorian Farmers Federation
Western Australian Farmers Federation
Wellard Rural Exports Pty Ltd
Western Australian Livestock Exporters Association
World Society for the Protection of Animals

(ii) Yes. All submissions received were considered as part of the process.

(d) The report, which will be a retrospective document that analyses the effects of ESCAS on animal welfare and trade, will be made publicly available on the department’s website.

Stronger Relationships Trial
(Question No. 670)

Ms Rowland asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 1 December 2014:

In respect of the $200 subsidy for relationship education or counselling under the Stronger Relationships trial, (a) how many subsidies were made available, and (b) how many couples have (i) applied for, (ii) received, and (iii) redeemed, the subsidy.

Mr Morrison: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) Up to 100,000 couples in a committed relationship can participate in the trial.

(b) As of 1 December 2014:

(i) Over 7,200 couples have registered for the Stronger Relationships trial and received a reference number that they can take to a service to receive a $200 discount on the fees for relationship education or counselling.

(ii) The department does not collect data on the number of couples who have booked or received a service.

(iii) Approved service providers have claimed over 2,100 subsidies.

Foreign Aid
(Question No. 671)

Ms Rowland asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 1 December 2014:

(1) Is the Australian Government currently providing Foreign Aid to the Russian Federation; if so, what sum.

(2) Has the Australian Government provided Foreign Aid to the Russian Federation over the previous 12 months; if so, what sum.
Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Australia does not currently provide Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the Russian Federation and has not in the previous 12 months. The Russian Federation is not on the OECD Development Assistance Committee's List of ODA Recipients and is therefore not eligible to receive ODA.

NBN Co Limited
(Question No. 673)

Ms MacTiernan asked the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 2 December 2014:

In respect of NBN Co Limited's (NBN Co's) media release dated 1 December 2014 regarding the new national broadband construction plan, (a) on what basis (i) were the suburbs prioritised and selected, and (ii) did NBN Co determine which area will receive what broadband technology, (b) given that the suburbs of Ashfield, Bassendean, Beechboro, Eden Hill, Kiara, Lockridge and Morley were previously on the National Broadband Network (NBN) roll out plan for 2013-14, that the related upgrade of the Bassendean Exchange was completed in 2014 and that these suburbs have been assessed as having the lowest ranking of Internet speeds and reliability, why were they not included in the latest NBN roll-out plan, and (c) will he release the documents that relate to the assessment of the priority for broadband rollout in those suburbs by NBN Co; if not, why not.

Mr Turnbull: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

On what basis were suburbs prioritised and selected? A number of factors are taken into account in determining the sequence of the NBN rollout. These include the existing infrastructure in a particular area, the capacity of NBN Co's construction partners, proximity of potential areas to existing work fronts, as well as other opportunities to minimise costs and to achieve early and high revenue (e.g. business areas). Importantly, the Government also asked NBN Co to prioritise underserved areas where commercially and operationally feasible.

On what basis did NBN Co determine which area will receive what broadband technology? On 13 November 2014, NBN Co released the 'NBN Multi-Technology Deployment Principles' which are available on www.nbnco.com.au. NBN Co is using these principles to determine which technology is best suited to each area.

Given that the suburbs of Ashfield, Bassendean, Beechboro, Eden Hill, Kiara, Lockridge and Morley were previously on the National Broadband Network (NBN) roll out plan for 2013-14, that the related upgrade of the Bassendean Exchange was completed in 2014 and that these suburbs have been assessed as having the lowest ranking of Internet speeds and reliability, why were they not included in the latest roll-out plan?

As you may be aware, by September 2013 the NBN rollout was 462,000 premises (or 55 per cent) behind the revised schedule that the former government announced in August 2012. At the same time peak funding that NBN Co Limited (NBN Co) needed to complete the network was estimated to have blown out by $28.5 billion (or 65 per cent), beyond the sum budgeted by the former government in August 2012.

The post-election Strategic Review estimated the proposed fibre-to-the-premises NBN would not be completed until 2024 at the earliest – meaning that hundreds of thousands of Australians faced a wait of a decade before they could obtain access to telehealth, the opportunities of the digital economy or any online services whatsoever.

In addition, the Strategic Review estimated that completing the fibre-to-the-premises network would increase the cost of broadband for an average household by $43 per month.
In fact, under Labor, there were only 34 premises in established neighbourhoods in Perth who were actually connected to the NBN's fibre network. In Western Australia in total, there were 91 premises. This is despite $6.5 billion being committed to the project.

No wonder people lost patience with Labor – it was not a National Broadband Network, it was, at best, an eastern states Broadband Network.

The areas specified in the question were listed on NBN Co's 'One Year Construction Rollout Plan' released in April 2013. However, construction activity did not commence as continuing issues with the Western Australian Delivery Partner hampered the rollout.

This example illustrates some of the problems with the NBN under the previous approach. The Government has committed to much greater transparency, and has undertaken a series of reviews and reforms to enable NBN Co to achieve its rollout targets.

While these areas are not currently in the rollout plan, the Government is committed to ensuring that the NBN reaches every Australian family by 2020. NBN Co has committed to providing quarterly updates of planned activity across Australia. Those interested should monitor NBN Co's website.

Will he release the documents that relate to the assessment of the priority for broadband rollout in those suburbs by NBN Co?

The Government has publically made available the Broadband Availability and Quality report, found at www.communications.gov.au. The report found that there are more than 1.6 million premises across Australia with very poor or no fixed broadband access at all.

The Government has asked NBN Co to determine which technologies should be utilised on an area-by-area basis so as to minimise peak funding, optimise economic returns and enhance the Company's viability. NBN Co also released the 'NBN Multi-Technology Deployment Principles' on its website at www.nbnco.com.au. The principles are used to determine which technologies are to be used in the rollout.

Industry Assistance
(Question No. 677)

Mr Zappia asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 4 December 2014:

In respect of his interview with Fran Kelly on ABC Radio National Breakfast, 2 December 2014, (a) what are the "hard decisions about industry assistance" that he referred to, (b) what industries have been affected by these hard decisions, and (c) did the Minister for Industry have any involvement in making these hard decisions.

Mr Hockey: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) to (c) The Australian Government ended unsustainable assistance to specific firms and industry sectors. Such assistance undermines productivity and economic growth. Instead, the Government is creating an economic environment that promotes investment and entrepreneurship, while assisting small to medium enterprises gain the capabilities and information they need to take advantage of new opportunities.

Details of the Government's industry policies are contained in the Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda, released by the Prime Minister on 14 October 2014; and in the Minister for Industry's press release of 13 May 2014, Building a globally competitive economy.

Personnel Headcount
(Question No. 679)

Ms Brodtmann asked the Assistant Minister for Defence, in writing on, 4 December 2014:
For each electoral division as at 30 September 2014, and as contained in the final pay figures for the July to September 2014 quarter within the Defence People Group of the Department of Defence, 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 September 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 20,799, of which 54 employees were on fixed-term contracts and 1,398 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 (i.e. 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 at payday 25 September 2014 was 19,530.

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**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**
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--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Durack | 2 | 50 | 8 | 212 | 26 | 298
Forrest | 2 | | | 19 | | 21
Fremantle | 1 | 37 | 9 | 2 | 107 | 96 | 252
Hasluck | 6 | 1 | 2 | | 27 | 16 | 52
Lingiari | | | | | 2 | | 2
Moore | 1 | 2 | | | 32 | | 35
O'connor | 1 | 1 | | | 31 | | 33
Pearce | 1 | 9 | 2 | 326 | | 277 | 35 | 650
Perth | 1 | 13 | 8 | | 3 | 12 | 1 | 38
Swan | | | | | 13 | 4 | 1 | 18
WA Total | 18 | 827 | 40 | 2353 | 3 | 361 | 2577 | 566 | 6745
O/Seas | 1 | 275 | 4 | 297 | 258 | 1 | 121 | 957
ADO | 369 | 29267 | 392 | 13841 | 64 | 1423 | 22692 | 20799 | 101660

Data ran from data warehouse: 8 Dec 2014

Note:

(a) CFTS' denotes Reservists on Continuous Full-Time Service.

(b) 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.

(i) and (ii) - The numbers of civilians (by headcount) on fixed-term contracts or employed part time as at 30 September 2014 are provided in Table B below.

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**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**
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Data ran from data warehouse: 8 Dec 2014

**Note:**

(a) For both tables, electorates not listed indicate there were no Defence employees working in that electoral division.

(b) Fixed Term contracts includes all non-ongoing F/T and P/T.

(c) Fixed term total include 20 P/T non-ongoing personnel.

(d) Part Time total includes all P/T non-ongoing and ongoing personnel.