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SITTING DAYS—2019

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FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office Holders
Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP
Deputy Speaker—Mr Kevin John Hogan MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP

Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP, Hon. Sharon Leah Bird MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Hon. Dr David Arthur Gillespie MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Hon. Dr John Joseph McVeigh MP, Ms Maria Vamvakou MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Andrew Bruce Wallace MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP, Mr Richard James Wilson MP, Mr Trent Moir Zimmerman MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Christian Porter MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Darren Chester MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Mark Butler MP

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

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

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

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<td>Wells, Ms Anika Shay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young, Mr Terry James</td>
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**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

Clerk of the Senate—R Pye

Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees

Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic

Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Ben Morton MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Scott Buchholz MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 09:30, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

COMMITTEES

Appropriations and Administration Committee

Report

The SPEAKER (09:31): For the information of honourable members, I present the annual report of 2018-19 of the Standing Committee on Appropriations and Administration. Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).

MOTIONS

Prime Minister

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (09:31): I seek leave to move the following motion:

That the house:

(1) notes that:

(a) in attempting to defend a Minister who has deliberately misled the Parliament, the Prime Minister misled the Parliament;

(b) yesterday in Question Time, the Prime Minister told the House that in March 2013, a then detective in Victoria Police's fraud squad, Ross Mitchell, made a statement about former Prime Minister Julia Gillard;

(c) that statement was made word for word by radio host Ben Fordham—a fact which was clear from The Australian newspaper article dated 27 April 2013 by Hedley Thomas which reports that statement;

(d) late yesterday, the Prime Minister admitted that he had misled the Parliament but despite House of Representatives Practice being clear that a misleading of Parliament can be corrected by either making a statement to the House or writing to the Clerk of the House, the Prime Minister instead directed that letter to the Speaker be tabled by another Minister; and

(e) the Prime Minister has refused repeated calls from the Leader of the Opposition to attend the House at 9.30 am today to correct the record in the form demanded by the House; and

(2) therefore, calls on the Prime Minister to do what is required by both House of Representatives Practice and his own Ministerial Standards and immediately attend the Chamber to correct his misleading statement.

Mr Porter: Just before I—

Mr ALBANESE: I'm seeking leave.

Mr Porter: I understand that and I'm seeking a clarification from the Speaker before I answer your request for leave.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition can resume his seat. The Leader of the House has a query to me.
Mr Porter: Mr Speaker, you noted yesterday that there were three potential ways in which, in this case, a misattribution of a quote could be cleared—

Opposition members interjecting—

The Speaker: I am just going to say to those on my left: I'm pretty tolerant when those on my left seek the call. If you want me to be less tolerant, it will be all around. I'm going to hear from the Leader of the House. I'll decide whether what he's saying is relevant or not, okay? I don't need any interventions.

Mr Porter: You noted that that can be done directly on indulgence. The Prime Minister was paired out last evening for a personal matter. You noted that, whilst it's not usual, a letter could be tabled to provide the clarification. As you noted, that is a mechanism to allow for that clarification to be made as quickly as possible. The third way in which it could happen is noted at page 566 of Practice, whereby the clarification can be given in writing to the Clerk and the Clerk would, in due course, treat that in the same manner as an answer to a question in writing, which would find its way onto the record some short time after the provision of that letter.

That letter to the Clerk, in precisely and substantially the same terms as the letter that was provided to you, has been provided to the Clerk by the Prime Minister this morning. So two of the three possible ways in which that clarification could be made have been made, and, in those circumstances, the Practice has been abided with, clearly, in the way that you indicated it needed to be, or should have been, or can be, yesterday.

The Speaker: I'll just make a couple of points, quickly, on the matter. The most important thing is, notwithstanding anything the Leader of the House says, that doesn't prevent anyone from moving a motion in the terms that the Leader of the Opposition has done. Even if I felt it did, it would be wrong for me to make a judgement on all of that, because they're matters that can be debated, if the debate is pursued. That's part of the point of it. In any event, there are so many aspects to the motion. The Leader of the House is entitled to point out what he's pointed out, and that can be pointed out as he did just then or in any debate that might follow. The Leader of the Opposition had sought leave. I call the Leader of the House.

Mr Porter: Leave is not granted.

Mr Albanese: What has just occurred is that I sought leave to move a motion. The Leader of the House responded, got to speak to the motion, and then didn't grant leave.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr Albanese: That's what's just happened.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition will just resume his seat for a second. I just said to the Leader of the House that I was happy to hear him on the issue of the motion and, in doing so, I gave some latitude for him to speak. Leave has now not been granted, so the Leader of the Opposition can move his motion. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Albanese: Given the new low in shutting down democratic debate in this House, I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Grayndler from moving the following motion immediately—That the House:
(1) notes that:
(a) in attempting to defend a Minister who has deliberately misled the Parliament, the Prime Minister misled the Parliament;
(b) yesterday in Question Time, the Prime Minister told the House that in March 2013, a then detective in Victoria Police's fraud squad, Ross Mitchell, made a statement about former Prime Minister Julia Gillard;
(c) that statement was made word for word by radio host Ben Fordham—a fact which was clear from The Australian newspaper article dated 27 April 2013 by Hedley Thomas which reports that statement;
(d) late yesterday, the Prime Minister admitted that he had misled the Parliament but despite House of Representatives Practice being clear that a misleading of Parliament can be corrected by either making a statement to the House or writing to the Clerk of the House, the Prime Minister instead directed that letter to the Speaker be tabled by another Minister; and
(e) the Prime Minister has refused repeated calls from the Leader of the Opposition to attend the House at 9.30 am today to correct the record in the form demanded by the House; and
(2) therefore, calls on the Prime Minister to do what is required by both House of Representatives Practice and his own Ministerial Standards and immediately attend the Chamber to correct his misleading statement.

The Leader of the House had an opportunity to—

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (09:39): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the Leader of the Opposition be no further heard.

The House divided. [09:43]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 73
Noes ...................... 66
Majority ............... 7

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
AYES

Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O’Neel, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakou, M
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (09:46): Is the motion seconded?

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh) (09:46): Seconded. This week has shown this Prime Minister has no judgement and no courage—

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (09:46): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the member for Hindmarsh be no longer heard.

The House divided. [09:47]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................73
Noes .................66
Majority ..............7

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS

NOES

Watts, TG
Wilson, JH
Wells, AS
Zappia, A

Ayes .................73
Noes .................66
Majority ..............7

AYES

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leerer, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Question agreed to.

**The SPEAKER (09:48):** The question now is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

**Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (09:48):** Why can't the Prime Minister just say that he made a mistake? Why doesn't he get—
Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (09:48): I move:

That the question be now put.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the question be now put.

The House divided. [09:49]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 73
Noes ...................... 66
Majority ............... 7

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Ales, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Aly, A

CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (09:50): The question now is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

The House divided. [09:51]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................66
Noes ......................73
Majority ..................7

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O’Neill, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Stegall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilson, JH
Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thistlthwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Zappia, A
AYES

Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilson, JH

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS

Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
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Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS

Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O'Connore, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DBP
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Wamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Zappa, A

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flett, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T

CHAMBER
House of Representatives
Thursday, 28 November 2019

Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

NOES

Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

Question negatived.

The SPEAKER (09:55): The Leader of the Opposition is seeking the call from me.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (09:55): I am, Mr Speaker, just to indicate that the opposition would give leave for the Prime Minister, given he's here, to actually approach the dispatch box, correct the record and say sorry, which is appropriate and which is what has been done in the past.

BILLS

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

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Frydenberg.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (09:56): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Protecting Consumers (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019 continues to fulfill the government's commitment to implement the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry.

The bill will implement the government's response to a further four recommendations of the royal commission: recommendation 4.7 to extend unfair contract terms to insurance contracts; recommendation 4.2 to ensure that consumer protection provisions apply to funeral expense policies; recommendation 1.2 to introduce a best interests duty requirement for mortgage brokers and recommendation 1.3 to reform mortgage broker remuneration.

Unfair contract terms in insurance contracts

National unfair contract terms laws currently protect consumers and small businesses who purchase financial products and services through standard form contracts. Until now, insurance contracts have been exempt from regulation by these laws.
Schedule 1 will increase protection for consumers and small businesses purchasing general and life insurance products. It will give effect to the royal commission recommendation 4.7 and bring insurance's regulation into line with that for the rest of the financial services sector.

Ensuring consumers and small businesses can purchase or renew their insurance policies with confidence is important. Insurance cover for homes, motor vehicles, building contents and income protection helps limit loss and support households and, in turn, the broader economy.

Deterring insurers from drafting unfair terms in standard contracts and providing a remedy in cases where they are found will support fair treatment of consumers and small businesses.

**Funeral expenses facilities**

The financial services royal commission uncovered evidence of significant harm caused to vulnerable consumers by the poor sales practices adopted by funeral expenses policy providers.

The exemption in the Corporations Act that has allowed these providers to escape the scrutiny of the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) will be removed. They will be subject to the Australian financial services licensing regime.

Schedule 2 of this bill will also ensure that the consumer protection provisions in the ASIC Act apply to funeral expenses policies, clarifying any ambiguity that may exist on this matter.

**Mortgage brokers**

Schedule 3 of the bill introduces a best interests duty for mortgage brokers that will ensure that consumers' interests are prioritised when a mortgage broker provides credit assistance, as regulated by the National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009. In practice this will mean that, in accordance with Commissioner Hayne's recommendations, a duty will apply in relation to the provision of consumer credit assistance and not business lending.

The government is also reforming mortgage broker remuneration, and the bill provides for a regulation making power to this end. The regulations will require the value of upfront commissions to be linked to the amount drawn down by borrowers instead of the loan amount; ban campaign and volume based commissions and payments; and cap soft dollar benefits.

Further, the period over which commissions can be clawed back from aggregators and mortgage brokers will be limited to two years, and passing on this cost to consumers will be prohibited.

After careful consideration, the government decided to delay consideration of aspects of Commissioner Hayne's recommendations for mortgage brokers—namely moving to a borrower-pays remuneration structure. We will be doing a review with the Council of Financial Regulators and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). That will be carried out in three years time.

Implementation of these reforms, as recommended by the royal commission, is a critical component of restoring trust and confidence in Australia's financial system and is part of the Morrison government's plan for a stronger economy.

Full details of the measures are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

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

First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Frydenberg.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (10:01): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.


Since the release of the royal commission final report, the government has implemented 16 of the commitments it outlined in its response. We have:

- legislated to end the grandfathering of conflicted remuneration;
- instigated and responded to the APRA Capability Review;
- expanded the remit of the Australian Financial Complaints Authority to require it to establish a new historical redress scheme to consider eligible financial complaints dating back to 1 January 2008;
- amended legislation to extend the product intervention power to, and impose design and distribution obligations on, all financial and credit products within ASIC's regulatory responsibility;
- initiated work with the states and territories towards establishing a national farm debt mediation scheme; and
- banned the inducement of employers by superannuation trustees and introduced civil penalties on superannuation trustees and directors for breaching the law.

Through this bill, the government is further delivering on its commitments by implementing the recommendations of the ASIC Enforcement Review Taskforce report.

This bill ensures that ASIC has the powers it needs to effectively enforce the laws it administers.

Specifically, the bill amends the law to:

- bring ASIC's current range of search warrant powers into line with those in the Crimes Act;
- provide ASIC with access to telecommunications intercept material for the investigation and prosecution of serious corporate law offences;
- strengthen ASIC's licensing powers;
- align the consequences under the Corporations Act for making a false and misleading statement to ASIC with those in the National Consumer Credit Protection Act; and
extend ASIC's banning powers to ban individuals from managing financial services or credit businesses.

ASIC is responsible for investigating serious indictable offences involving corporate criminal misconduct—those that carry a prison sentence of 12 months or more. This bill harmonises and aligns ASIC's various search warrant powers with those contained in the Crimes Act, removing the current requirement for ASIC to 'forewarn' those under investigation, which provides an opportunity to destroy or conceal evidence of misconduct.

The bill also amends the law to allow ASIC to access and receive telecommunications intercept material to investigate and prosecute serious offences, bringing them into line with other agencies responsible for investigating serious offences.

Strengthening ASIC's licensing powers will ensure that credit and financial service licensees, and the people who control them, are fit and proper to be carrying on a financial services business. Ensuring that controllers such as significant shareholders are fit and proper is essential in deciding whether a licence should be granted or retained.

This bill also amends the law to allow ASIC to ban a person from performing functions in a financial services or credit business where they are not a fit and proper person and provides new grounds for ASIC to ban a person, for example where they have twice been linked to a refusal or failure to give effect to a determination of the Australian Financial Complaints Authority.

The measures in this bill have been the subject of extensive public consultation, both by the ASIC Enforcement Review Taskforce and in their exposure draft form. The Legislative and Governance Forum for Corporations was consulted in relation to the bill as required under the Corporations Agreement 2002 and the national credit agreement 2009.

Full details on these measures are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Debate adjourned.

**Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2019**

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Dutton.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Home Affairs) (10:06): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The government is committed to supporting the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and its critical work in working towards a safer Australia.

As Australia's national criminal intelligence agency, the ACIC undertakes essential and indispensable functions in gathering intelligence and undertaking investigations to inform a national picture of crime as it impacts Australia. In doing so, the ACIC is contributing to an Australia that is better connected, better informed and highly capable of responding to transnational, serious and organised crime, cybercrime, and national security threats.
The threat environment and risks to Australia's national security are constantly evolving, endangering the safety, security and prosperity of Australia and our way of life. Organised crime syndicates are highly resilient to traditional investigative and intelligence-gathering methodologies and readily adapt to advances in technologies in their attempts to evade detection and disruption.

The Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill will ensure that the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission can continue to effectively detect, prevent and disrupt the nefarious activities of serious and organised crime targets.

This bill will make technical amendments to the Australian Crime Commission Act 2002 to streamline the authorisation process for the ACIC board to determine future special operations and special investigations and will confirm the validity of existing special operation and special investigation determinations. The bill does not expand or otherwise alter the powers available to the ACIC in the course of undertaking a special operation or special investigation.

The bill also makes minor consequential amendments to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement Act 2010 and the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 as a result of the technical amendments to the Australian Crime Commission Act.

The measures in this bill are vital to safeguarding the ability of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission to fulfil its statutory functions and actively contribute to a safer and more secure Australia.

I pay tribute to Mr Michael Phelan, CEO of the ACIC, and all of the staff—the investigators, the analysts and those that support all of the operations that are underway on a daily basis to keep Australians safe. We continue to provide strong support to their efforts and to their work. It's invaluable, and the professionalism of Mr Phelan and all of those involved at the ACIC is recognised here domestically but around the world as well.

On that basis, I commend the bill to the chamber.

Debate adjourned.

Trade Support Loans Amendment (Improving Administration) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Irons.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr Irons (Swan—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships) (10:10): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I am introducing the Trade Support Loans Amendment Bill. This bill will improve the administration of the Trade Support Loans (TSL) program by providing another avenue for Australian apprentices to pay overpayment debts. During the 2018-19 financial year, the Trade Support Loans Program provided financial support to 55,998 Australian apprentices to assist with everyday costs whilst completing their apprenticeship.
The measure proposed by this bill will allow TSL overpayments to be managed with minimum administrative burden on Australian apprentices.

An example of when an overpayment might occur is where an Australian apprentice temporarily ceases their apprenticeship and an instalment of TSL is made before the department is notified of the apprenticeship ceasing. In such circumstances, instead of the Australian apprentice being invoiced to repay the amount back to the Commonwealth, under this bill the delegate can reduce the amount of future payable instalments, effectively offsetting the overpayment against those instalments.

This bill will provide legislative footing for offsetting as a way of recovering overpayment debts.

The bill also aligns the TSL written notification periods to allow for more flexibility:

- In respect of the notice requirements relating to the delegate's general information-gathering powers, the bill will provide the delegate with a discretion to specify a period, longer than 14 days, for notifying a change of the person's address.

- In respect of the delegate's notice regarding the obligation to notify change of circumstances, the bill will also align the minimum notification period with that of the Secretary's general information-gathering powers.

The Australian public can be confident that the new offsetting arrangements will continue to support Australian apprentices whilst undertaking their apprenticeship. This bill is part of government's ongoing commitment to reducing red tape and safeguarding the integrity and reputation of its income contingent loan programs.

I commend the Bill.

Debate adjourned.

**Student Identifiers Amendment (Enhanced Student Permissions) Bill 2019**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Irons.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr IRONS (Swan—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships) (10:13): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Student Identifiers Amendment (Enhanced Student Permissions) Bill 2019 (the bill) expands the range of entities that may request access to an individual's authenticated vocational education and training (VET) transcript. It also: creates a civil penalty and infringement notice regime, clarifies the Student Identifiers Registrar's power to grant an exemption to the requirement to hold a student identifier and clarifies spending powers associated with the Student Identifiers Special Account.

The nature of work in Australia is changing. Australia's capacity to grow, compete and thrive in a global economy has become more dependent on employers and all individuals, regardless of background or circumstance, being able to access and use the right skills at the right time.
The Australian government is strengthening our VET system to be a modern, flexible and trusted sector that provides an excellent standard of education and training. A strong vocational education and training sector is critical to our economy and to helping prepare Australians for the workforce opportunities of today and the future.

This bill supports transparency for employers looking to verify VET their employees or potential employees have undertaken.

An authenticated VET transcript includes information about any VET courses, modules or units of competency undertaken by an individual after 1 January 2015.

Individuals with a student identifier can access their national training record in the form of an authenticated VET transcript through the student identifiers transcript service. The student identifier helps students to keep track of the skills they have acquired and to share that information with employers. Over 1.3 million training participants have accessed their transcripts since the service became available in May 2017. Industry has indicated that combining an individual's VET information into one document has saved time for businesses.

Since the activation of authenticated VET transcripts, employers, employment agencies and state, territory and Commonwealth licensing bodies have shown an interest in being able to verify an individual's authenticated VET transcript. However, this is not currently supported by the Student Identifiers Act 2014.

Although individuals set access controls at present, they can only give access to a registered training organisation or a VET related body.

This bill enables this student controlled access to transcripts to be extended to businesses, recruitment agencies, licensing bodies and other third parties.

This change provides confidence to industry on the authenticity of VET qualifications and reduces regulatory burden for the individual and third parties—for instance, streamlining recruitment processes and reducing the costs to businesses, small, medium and large, and other bodies that rely on individuals having the right credentials.

These arrangements also reduce the risk of individuals tampering with their transcript before providing it to an employer.

While the amendments proposed by the bill will enable a broader range of entities to request access to an individual's authenticated VET transcript, the individual's privacy will remain protected. In particular, individuals will retain the authority to set the access controls for their stored authenticated VET transcript. This includes setting the period that an authenticated transcript can be viewed as well as the removal of access to their stored authenticated VET transcript at any time.

A privacy impact assessment was conducted for this initiative. All recommendations have been agreed to and are being implemented.

The bill introduces a civil penalty regime to protect the integrity of the student identifiers initiative and to act as a deterrent to fraudulent behaviours in the sector relating to authenticated VET transcripts and student identifiers.

The amendments will enable the Student Identifiers Registrar to commence civil penalty proceedings or to issue infringement notices in respect of:

- knowingly applying for more than one student identifier,
applying for a student identifier on behalf of an individual without their authorisation,
• altering authenticated VET transcripts and extracts of authenticated VET transcripts, and
• making a false document purporting to be an authenticated VET transcript or extract.

An accessible, high-quality VET sector that is responsive to industry needs will giveustralians the chance to succeed, to build a career and fulfilling life for themselves and their families.

An estimated four million Australians build and enhance their skills by undertaking vocational education and training every year. All individuals undertaking nationally recognised training need to have a student identifier issued by the Student Identifiers Registrar. This includes individuals enrolled in a VET course while completing their secondary school studies. Over 10 million student identifiers have now been created.

The bill makes it clear that the Student Identifiers Registrar has the power to determine by exemption whether a VET qualification or VET statement of attainment can be issued by a registered training organisation to an individual who does not have a student identifier.

To ensure they do not unknowingly miss out on the benefits of having a student identifier, the individual will need to declare they understand the consequences of not being assigned a student identifier in their application to the Student Identifiers Registrar, including being unable to generate an authenticated VET transcript.

Further minor amendments clarify the Student Identifiers Registrar’s powers to spend in relation to the purposes of the Student Identifiers Special Account. This will ensure efficient administration of the student identifiers scheme.

To remove ambiguity about sharing information with law enforcement bodies, the bill notes that the Student Identifiers Registrar can disclose information in an authenticated VET transcript in accordance with Australian Privacy Principle 6. APP 6 permits disclosure for enforcement related activities.

A strong VET sector will provide positive economic and social outcomes and will encourage more students to choose VET as a pathway to a rewarding and exciting career. This will support millions of Australians to obtain the skills they need to participate and prosper in the modern economy.

Closing information gaps and improving the transparency of the training sector will increase confidence in VET and make more information available to training consumers, industry, registered training organisations, regulators and governments.

The ability for employers, employment agencies, and state, territory and Commonwealth licensing bodies to verify an individual's academic record will increase transparency of the VET sector and reduce regulatory burden during employment recruitment exercises and funding requests, making it easier to verify VET qualifications. This initiative will provide confidence to industry on the authenticity of VET qualifications while keeping information under the control of the individual.

I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.
Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019

First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Fletcher.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) (10:21): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.
The Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019, which I am introducing today, will, together with the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019, improve the provision of superfast broadband in Australia.

The bills were previously passed by the House of Representatives in 2018, but had not been passed by the Senate before the 2019 election. The government is bringing them back largely as previously introduced. There are some amendments that are operational improvements. There are also some amendments to the Regional Broadband Scheme to adopt amendments moved by the opposition when the bills were previously before the parliament.

The competition and consumer bill contains three key measures.

Firstly, the bill will make carrier separation rules for superfast residential networks more effective and more flexible, giving carriers greater scope to invest in superfast networks and compete.

The changes to carrier separation rules will allow carriers, other than NBN Co, to operate fixed-line superfast networks with both wholesale and retail businesses, rather than to be wholesale only as is currently required.

Secondly, new statutory infrastructure provider (or SIP) obligations on NBN Co, and other carriers playing a comparable role, will support the ongoing delivery of superfast broadband services.

The statutory infrastructure provider obligations will place an explicit statutory requirement on NBN Co, or other carriers playing a comparable role, to connect premises and supply wholesale superfast broadband services on reasonable request from a retail provider. The baseline speed to be supplied is 25 megabits per second download and five megabits per second upload.

NBN Co will need to take all reasonable steps to ensure that 90 per cent of premises connected to its fixed-line networks can receive broadband speeds of 50 megabits per second download and 10 megabits per second upload. NBN Co's fixed-line networks should be able to connect at least 92 per cent of premises across Australia.

Thirdly, the Regional Broadband Scheme will establish a transparent and equitable funding mechanism to make sure NBN Co's satellite and fixed wireless services can continue to provide superfast broadband to regional Australia.
All carriers would contribute $7.10 per month per premises where a broadband service is provided over their high-speed fixed-line networks. It is intended that the charge would apply to all premises serviced by fibre to the premises, fibre to the node, fibre to the basement, fibre to the curb and hybrid fibre-coaxial networks.

The Regional Broadband Scheme charge has been designed to accommodate complex service types. For example, 'local access line' in the legislation includes customer cabling in multi-dwelling units, such as apartment blocks. This ensures that a premises in apartment blocks will be covered by the charge where a cable line is also used to supply carriage services to the unit.

The deeming provision under proposed subsection 76A(4) interacts with proposed section 94, which relates to ownership of 'local access lines'. To minimise avoidance of the charge, subsection 76A(4) makes clear that customer cabling to a premises inside a multi-unit building can be considered local access lines that are part of the local access network of a carrier, even if that carrier has no legal ownership of those cables.

Once established, the Regional Broadband Scheme will provide certainty for regional Australians that their essential broadband services will be maintained and available into the future.

The government recognises that broadband technology is constantly evolving and new technologies may emerge at any time. The government is committed to reviewing the Regional Broadband Scheme on a regular basis to make sure that the funding base remains appropriate. The bill includes a requirement to conduct a review within four years of the scheme commencing.

**Conclusion**

The bill makes important changes to the regulatory framework to strengthen the provision of superfast broadband infrastructure across Australia. The changes put the customer experience at the forefront by ensuring consumers can benefit from greater wholesale and retail competition, access superfast broadband under the statutory infrastructure provider obligation and are supported by sustainable funding arrangements for essential broadband services in regional, rural and remote Australia.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Fletcher.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) (10:26): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019, which I am introducing today, will, together with schedule 4 of the Telecommunications Legislation
Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019, establish the Regional Broadband Scheme to provide a transparent and fair funding mechanism that supports the long-term operation of NBN Co's loss-making fixed-wireless and satellite networks into the future.

The two bills establish arrangements to underpin the ongoing availability of essential broadband services to all areas of Australia, particularly, rural and regional Australia. Minor changes have been made to the operation of the Regional Broadband Scheme in line with proposals tabled in the Senate by the opposition that the government announced it would support at the time of the budget last April. These changes provide greater certainty to telecommunications carriers and further ease the burden of transition to the scheme for smaller carriers.

The Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019 would impose, from the first July after passage, a monthly charge on carriers in relation to each premises connected to their network that has an active fixed-line superfast broadband service during the month. If the bill is passed during the 2019-20 financial year, the proposed charge, which is a tax for constitutional purposes, would commence from 1 July 2020. The charge would have two components: a base component and an administrative cost component. The bill would set the initial base component amount at $7.09, which is then subject to indexation. The bill also sets the administrative cost component for the first five years. The combined component cap, comprising the base component and administrative cost component, is set at $7.10 which is also subject to indexation.

The money collected from the base component of the charge would be used to fund the losses NBN Co incurs in constructing and operating its fixed-wireless and satellite networks, replacing the company's opaque internal cross-subsidy from its fixed-line networks. These networks provide access to essential high-speed broadband services to up to one million premises, mostly in regional and remote areas. The money collected from the administrative cost component would fund the enforcement and administration costs of the Australian Communications and Media Authority and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission associated with the scheme.

The bill would require the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, or ACCC, to give advice to the minister in relation to the base and administrative cost components at least once every five years following a costing assessment, which would include industry consultation, being undertaken by the ACCC.

The administrative arrangements for the Regional Broadband Scheme, including arrangements for the annual (in arrears) assessment and collection of the charge, and associated reporting arrangements, are set out in schedule 4 to the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019. The Australian Communications and Media Authority, or ACMA, is the administrator of the Regional Broadband Scheme; the government expects that ACMA will engage with the telecommunications industry in applying the new regulatory framework.

The ACCC advises on the setting of charges; the government expects the ACCC will also engage with industry. This engagement should aim to reduce the regulatory burden in implementing the Regional Broadband Scheme (and the one-off reporting arrangement), including by publishing interpretative guidance to industry.
Once the NBN rollout is complete, NBN Co is likely to have around 95 per cent of the fixed-line broadband market, which means it will continue funding the bulk of the net costs for providing broadband services to regional Australia.

Customers on NBN Co's network will not experience price rises as the charge is already embedded in NBN Co's pricing. For the remaining five per cent, many of these networks service medium and large businesses, which will for the first time contribute to funding regional broadband. It will be up to those networks to decide whether some or all of the charge is passed on to their customers.

Once established, the effect of the Regional Broadband Scheme will be that all NBN-comparable fixed-line networks contribute to transparent funding for regional broadband. In turn, regional Australians can have confidence that their essential broadband services will be available into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

PARLIAMENTARY ZONE
Mrs MARINO (Forrest—Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories) (10:31): I move:

That, in accordance with section 5 of the Parliament Act 1974, the House approve the following proposal for work in the Parliamentary Zone which was presented to the House on 25 November 2019, namely: National Gallery of Australia foreshore footpath and lighting upgrade.

Question agreed to.

PARLIAMENTARY ZONE
Mrs MARINO (Forrest—Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories) (10:32): I move:

That, in accordance with section 5 of the Parliament Act 1974, the House approve the following proposal for work in the Parliamentary Zone which was presented to the House on 25 November 2019, namely: Sir John Gorton commemorative sculpture and interpretive sign.

The National Capital Authority is seeking approval for the proposed works within the Parliamentary Zone, being a commemoration of Sir John Gorton, who served as Australia's 19th Prime Minister between 10 January 1968 and 10 March 1971. The proposed works include a full life, cast bronzed sculpture of Sir John with Suzie Q, his collie kelpie. Located near to the sculpture on a metal sign would be the interpretive material describing aspects of Sir John's life and achievements. The project has been developed by the National Capital Authority in close collaboration with the Gorton family. Approval of both houses is sought under section 5(1) of the Parliament Act 1974 for the proposed works in the Parliamentary Zone. I commend this motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES
Migration Committee
Membership
Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (10:34): On behalf of the Leader of the House, I move:
That Dr Martin be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Migration and that, in her place, Mr Drum be appointed a member of the committee.

A division having been called and the bells being rung—

Mr Falinski: Point of order: was there a second person who called for a division?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): I'd suggest to the member that if you want to call a point of order, do it properly. Stand up, or else help everyone and be quiet.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion moved by the minister be agreed to.

The House divided. [10:39]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...............74
Noes ................60
Majority............14

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

And

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T
Question agreed to.

Road Safety Joint Select Committee

Appointment

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (10:43): It does say, 'on behalf of the Leader of the House,' but I will leave that bit out! I move:

That:

(1) the resolution of appointment of the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety be amended to read as follows:

That:

(a) a Joint Select Committee on Road Safety be appointed to inquire into and report on:

(i) the effectiveness of existing road safety support services and programs, including opportunities to integrate Safe System principles into health, education, industry and transport policy;
(ii) the impact of road trauma on the nation, including the importance of achieving zero deaths and serious injuries in remote and regional areas;

(iii) the possible establishment of a future parliamentary Standing Committee on Road Safety and its functions;

(iv) measures to ensure state, territory and local government road infrastructure investment incorporates the Safe System principles;

(v) road trauma and incident data collection and coordination across Australia;

(vi) recommending strategies, performance measures and targets for the next National Road Safety Strategy;

(vii) recommendations for the role of the newly established Office of Road Safety; and

(viii) other measures to support the Australian Parliament’s ongoing resolve to reduce incidents on our roads, with a focus on the recommendations from the Inquiry into the effectiveness of the National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020;

(b) the committee present an interim report on or before 31 July 2020 and its final report on or before 31 October 2020;

(c) the committee consist of nine members, four Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, two Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any minority group or independent Member, and one Senator to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, one Senator to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, and one Senator to be nominated by any minority group or independent Senator;

(d) participating members may

(i) be appointed to the committee on the nomination of the Government Whip in the House of Representatives, the Opposition Whip in the House of Representatives, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate or any minority party or independent member of the House of Representatives; and

(ii) participate in hearings of evidence and deliberations of the committee, and have all the rights of members of the committee, but may not vote on any question before the committee.

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

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

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

(h) the committee elect:

(i) a Government member as its chair; and

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

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

(j) in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote;
(k) three members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include one Government member of either House and one non-Government member of either House;

(l) the committee:

(i) have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of three or more of its members, and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine; and

(ii) appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only;

(m) each subcommittee shall have at least one Government member of either House and one non-Government member of either House;

(n) at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee, the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting;

(o) two members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include one Government member of either House and one non-Government member of either House;

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

(q) the committee or any subcommittee have power to:

(i) call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced;

(ii) conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit;

(iii) sit in public or in private;

(iv) report from time to time; and

(v) adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the House of Representatives and the Senate;

(r) the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of any former committee on related matters; and

(s) the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders; and

(2) a message be sent to the Senate requesting its concurrence in the amended resolution.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion moved by the Leader of the House be agreed to.

The House divided. [10:44]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................74
Noes ......................61
Majority .................13

AYES

Alexander, JG  
Andrews, KJ  
Archer, BK  
Broadbent, RE  
Chester, D  
Conaghan, PJ

Allen, K  
Andrews, KL  
Bell, AM  
Buchholz, S  
Christensen, GR  
Connelly, V

CHAMBER
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CHAMBER
GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Report from Federation Chamber

Order of the day returned from Federation Chamber; certified copy of the report presented.

Ordered that the order of the day be considered immediately.

Consideration resumed of the motion:

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

Question agreed to.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (10:47): Mr Speaker, for the orderly functioning of the House, could you advise whether the government intends to adjourn the House next Wednesday and at what time.

The SPEAKER (10:46): I remind the House that the address-in-reply will be presented to his Excellency the Governor-General at Government House at 5 pm next Wednesday.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (10:47): Mr Speaker, for the orderly functioning of the House, could you advise whether the government intends to adjourn the House next Wednesday and at what time.

The SPEAKER: I outlined earlier in the week that the House would be suspended for the period. I presume that we would resume, but I might leave that to the Leader of the House. Obviously, it will be in enough time to get out there; but as to whether it is at the conclusion of the matter of public importance, the Leader of the House will let us know. The normal practice is to suspend and then return and close at the normal time.

COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training

Report

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (10:48): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, I present the committee’s report entitled Status of the teaching profession together with the minutes of proceedings.

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

Mr LAMING: I seek leave to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave not granted.
Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (10:49): Before I was interrupted yesterday, I proposed a second reading amendment. I move:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"the House:
(1) declines to give the bill a second reading;
(2) notes that the Government is not doing enough to combat the blatant theft of workers' entitlements by dodgy bosses;
(3) calls on the Government to help protect Australian unions protect Australian workers from superannuation theft; and
(4) further calls on the Government to end policy uncertainty on superannuation and ensure Australians can enjoy a comfortable retirement by committing to the legislated increases to the superannuation guarantee".

I understand that the member for Moreton is very, very keen to second that amendment but has not yet done so. Our superannuation system is a significant national achievement. It sits alongside the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Medicare and the National Disability Insurance Scheme as something that has made our nation stronger and something that all Australians are very proud of. Fifteen million Australians hold superannuation accounts. Most of these funds are performing pretty well: 16 per cent per annum average return over the last 10 years. There are around $2.8 trillion in assets—that's more than 140 per cent of gross domestic product. Under current settings, that will grow to $9.5 trillion by 2035, expanding the pool of funds available for investment in local infrastructure and a stream of earnings from foreign investments. It's also strengthening our current account balance. Under current policy settings, the median balance on retirement for full-time workers will be $310,000 for women and something approaching $630,000 for men—a gap that we need policy settings to close.

Despite the low level of engagement, generally superannuation enjoys popular support. More than 91 per cent of Australians strongly support the superannuation system, a level of popularity that every member in this place could only hope for. That's a higher approval rating than the ABC's. The success and popularity of super does not mean it's perfect. We know there are issues that need to be dealt with, issues which demand the attention of government and industry. Unpaid superannuation totalling almost $6 billion per annum is one of those issues.

My deep concern, and the concern reflected in my second reading amendment, is that focus is being distracted away from these issues by the constant campaigning by members opposite to destroy our superannuation system, to undermine what we thought, going into the last election, was a bipartisan position that the legislated increases from 9.5 per cent to 12 per cent between 2021 and 2025 would persist. And yet we have a persistent noise, a persistent campaign being raised by in excess of 12 members opposite—we call them 'the dirty dozen'—
who each takes home 15 per cent in superannuation, which is, for some reason, fair for them. It's very fair for members of this place to enjoy 15 per cent superannuation, but it's somehow unfair for the people who clean their offices, the people who work in this place, the people who struggle on part-time jobs to make ends meet to only receive 9½ per cent superannuation.

We call on the Prime Minister to bring these rebels into line. We call on him to bring these rebels into line, because nothing is undermining the success of superannuation more than the constant policy change and the constant noise coming from the members of the government who are saying: 'It does not matter that we went to the last election promising 12 per cent superannuation for Australian workers; that promise does not matter. We want to junk that in this term of office, and we want to ensure that everyone is frozen on nine per cent, so cutting their superannuation entitlements.' It's time for the Prime Minister to bring these rebels into line. I see the member for Hughes up there making a big noise. It's always the empty can that makes the most noise, and the member for Hughes makes a lot of noise indeed. He's at the frontline of the dirty dozen, saying, 'The people who clean my office are not entitled to the same levels of superannuation as I am.'

Mr Craig Kelly: It's their money!

Mr STEPHEN JONES: And he's right: it is their money, and he has no right to be campaigning to have their superannuation entitlements cut. We look forward to the battle. If they are saying to the Australian people, 'The promises that we took to the last election do not matter; we're going to turn them on their head and tear up the promise to stick by the legislated superannuation guarantee,' then we will join in battle with them, because a promise is a promise. You've torn it up, and we will ensure that that hangs around your head every day between now and the next election.

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

Mr Perrett: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (10:55): It's always a great privilege to follow the member for Whitlam, because every time he gets up and pontificates, with a hysterical and overacted performance of what he thinks he can prosecute in this parliament and the arguments he thinks are going to convince anybody, it is always the same argument, which is: the solution to the problem is more of him, not empowering millions of Australians.

This bill, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Recovering Unpaid Superannuation) Bill 2019, is actually relatively straightforward. It honours the commitment we have made to make sure that we assist in making sure that Australians get paid their superannuation. That's critically important. The superannuation guarantee provides that people are paid their superannuation on time; that it is paid for, consistent with the law; and that everybody gets the money that they deserve. This piece of legislation makes sure that, where there has been a failure to honour the law, there's an amnesty in place for businesses to do the right thing. The amnesty is critical because many businesses who may have unintentionally done the wrong thing want to be brought into compliance. They want to have a pathway to solve the problem. We want workers to be able to get their superannuation and for the legislative environment to accommodate that purpose, rather than going on grandstanding objectives and tilting at windmills, as the member for Whitlam just did in his speech.
Critically, this legislation also makes sure we improve the integrity of the superannuation guarantee system, including through the expansion of the existing Single Touch Payroll. It's to make sure there's a pathway where any employer honours their obligations to workers and pays their superannuation contribution. It ensures there's clarity in the system, that workers can take confidence around the security of their superannuation balances and that people are paying their superannuation on time. The government has done this not just by providing legislative pathways to do so, but also by resourcing the Australian tax office to make sure there's compliance. There was an extra $133.7 million in last financial year's budget, and that has enabled a huge number of audits and processes to take place. That sits against the backdrop of the protecting your superannuation act, which commenced on 1 July this year. That act provides for a pathway to get people's superannuation contributions rolled into single accounts and reunited where people have a number of accounts.

On many levels, this legislation is critically important but, frankly, very administrative. But that doesn't change its purpose and intent, which is honouring the obligation that this government has made to workers across the country. It sits against the backdrop of the inquiry that the Standing Committee on Economics is running at the moment, in the implementation of the Hayne royal commission's recommendations in making sure that all financial institutions, banks, insurance, life insurance advice as well as superannuation funds are honouring the law.

Superannuation, more than anything else, is a foundation of trust: workers receive money to put towards their retirement, and when that money is put in trust for them, invested for their future, they come to rely on it for their future security. It's pretty straightforward, and that's why the inquiry we're running is so critical. And, I can report back to the House, as part of that journey and that process, that we have uncovered worrying trends. We talked before about the protecting your superannuation reforms package, where the Australian Taxation Office is reuniting accounts for many workers who have duplicate accounts or where their super money is sitting in low-balance inactive accounts. At the last hearing we heard lots of concerning stories about millions of accounts being rolled from inactive low-balance accounts, where they're just eating into by fees, and instead being rolled into eligible rollover funds by industry superannuation so that they can be reactivated.
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CHAMBER
Question negatived

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (11:08): The member for Moreton has just proven my point. The point I was making was about how every single time we raise any misappropriation of the funds of Australian workers and their superannuation accounts the Labor Party runs interference. Every time we ask a question and every time we want accountability in the super system, they run interference for their mates in the sector. They won't stand up for workers. They won't stand up for savers. They just do what they do to shut down discussion and debate. That's exactly what we identified in the economics committee only the other day, where we found eligible rollover funds and the re-establishing of low-balance inactive accounts. As a consequence, there are industry super funds that can now mine them for more fees, more profits and more insurance payments that they would otherwise be ineligible for. What they should have been doing is rolling them into the Australian Taxation Office as part of the protecting your super arrangement. That's precisely why this type of legislative reform is critical. It may seem administrative, but it matters.

What is deeply, deeply disturbing is how much these members on the opposition benches simply get up and run this point of interference. They don't ask the tough questions in Economics Committee hearings. Let's face it, the member for—where's Andrew Leigh from?

Mr Falinski: Whitlam?

Mr TIM WILSON: No, not Whitlam. How ineffective he is!

An opposition member: You're doing well! Fenner!

Mr TIM WILSON: The member for Fenner—that's his name!—the deputy chair. At our hearings with Westpac, only the other week, he didn't ask a single question about AUSTRAC when it was actually raised with us—I raised it as chair. But they had nothing to say and nothing to ask about it. The reality is that every time they have a chance to stand up for workers, stand up for savers or stand up for integrity in the financial services system they run interference, because they're not prepared to do the right thing.
Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (11:10): I am pleased that the government is taking steps to address the huge issue that is unpaid super for many workers in Australia through this Treasury Laws Amendment (Recovering Unpaid Superannuation) Bill 2019. Back in September 2017 I asked the then Minister for Revenue and Financial Services, through a question in writing, whether she had 'considered conducting a moratorium for employers with unpaid superannuation guarantee charge to provide them with the opportunity to come clean and make good'.

I have consistently and ardently sought to help employees who have been denied their rightful super payments, because it is unfair for workers and their financial futures and security, and it is unfair for competing businesses who do the right thing. And it's unfair for the taxpayer, who picks up the burden through higher spending on pensions if people don't get the super they deserve.

I have already referred to the private member's bill I introduced which sought to deal with these issues in detail, but we do need to do so much more. Any measure that provides a meaningful opportunity for employees to recover unpaid super is worthy of consideration. The bill and the moratorium it legislates to induce payment of unpaid super does provide a meaningful opportunity, but while this is a potential step in the right direction, it is a very small step. According to Treasury, only $230 million from the debt of approximately $6 billion in unpaid super is anticipated to be collected.

I also recognise the moral hazard involved in encouraging delinquent employers into believing that such moratoriums may become a regular feature in the future. For this reason, I believe that some surety in the legislation that another moratorium of this type will not occur within a reasonable time frame—say, for example, within the next 10 years—is needed. This would provide some reassurance to those concerned that the moratorium sends a signal with a perverse outcome. Indeed, it would clarify and mitigate against perverse outcomes, and I would encourage the government to consider an amendment in the Senate that may provide this kind of surety to overcome the problem of moral hazard.

I should also note that, while I support this legislation in this place, Centre Alliance will give the bill further consideration in the other place, and so we reserve our position. I would ask the government to properly fund the ATO, to ensure that enforcement activities occur. Approximately $2.8 billion gets added to the unpaid super debt every year. Quite frankly, if the ATO were a business with such mounting debt for super, carrying that debt year on year, well, they'd sack their debtors clerk—that is, if the doors to the business were not yet closed.

And it is so difficult for employees: they can't sue their employer or their previous employer. They just cross their fingers and hope the employer will do the right thing and that the ATO will take up the money owed to them. I have constituents who have long since retired and who are still waiting for payment from their previous employer. I had the ATO write a letter to one constituent. They sent him a notice that they had been able to obtain just one cent for him! Seriously! It costs more to put the stamp on the envelope than what the ATO were able to claim. The current pathway for pursuing unpaid super is incredibly poor and does not get the outcomes that we need. According to Cbus, without action, unpaid super and lost earnings will reach $66 billion by 2024. We just can't afford this as a nation.

In closing, I would encourage the government to better resource the unpaid super section of the ATO. If the government is not going to do that, we need to empower employees by listing
superannuation under the National Employment Standards, in the Fair Work Act. This would
at least provide the avenue for employees to pursue recidivist employers through the courts.

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (11:15): I rise to speak on the Treasury Laws Amendment
(Recovering Unpaid Superannuation) Bill 2019. I think the issues that have been raised are
important ones, as the member for Mayo just pointed out. The ATO has been undertaking vast
amounts of resources to collect unpaid super. The Single Touch Payroll portal it’s introduced
will ensure that, moving forward, people who are not collecting superannuation on behalf of
their employers will be identified much quicker. The figure that the member for Mayo talked
about comes from industry super. Industry super has been unable to verify its figures, and it
throws out these multibillion-dollar figures without any evidence for doing so.

When I sought an intervention yesterday on the member for Whitlam to ask him the source
of his research and his numbers, he declined to provide that to us and instead asked me to
make a contribution to this debate, which I did—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird): The member for Mackellar will resume his seat for
a moment. I give the call to the member for Moreton.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:16): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the member for Mackellar be no further heard.

The House divided. [11:21]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................61
Noes ......................75
Majority ...............14

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
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Gosling, LJ
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O'Neil, CE
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Rowland, MA
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Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Zappia, A
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilson, JH

NOES
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
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Broadbent, RE
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Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
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Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
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Landry, ML
Ley, SP
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O’Brien, LS
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Pitt, KJ
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Robert, SR
Sharma, DN
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T
Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
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Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Simmonds, J
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

Question negatived.

CHAMBER
Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (11:24): As I was saying, the member for Whitlam came in here yesterday and wouldn't take an intervention. The intervention was to answer the question of where he gets some of his figures from. Indeed, I wanted to know where his research is from that shows moratoriums don't work. What we've actually found out is, just one Google search away, there are 312 academic articles on the impact and effectiveness of moratoriums, everything from protecting rainforests in Indonesia to improving tax collection and, indeed, gun collection. Not all of those articles, because overnight I did have to sleep for a few minutes, but the vast majority of articles that I could acquaint myself with all point to one thing: that moratoriums work.

Given that we have a single-touch payroll being introduced, given that academic articles demonstrate that moratoriums work, given that, according to industry super, there are tens of billions of dollars' worth of superannuation ready to be collected and given that businesses, in anticipation—trusting the word of this parliament, trusting the word of those both on this side and those opposite that a moratorium would be announced—have come forward to actually review their accounts and to pay those monies. It seems to us quite reasonable that this parliament would not only pass this bill but do it with absolute speed so that we could create certainty and start collecting the money that those opposite say they're so concerned about employees having.

Why is it that those opposite are opposed? Could it be that some of the people who are not in favour of this are some of their largest donors? I don't know. I'm not in the boardrooms. I don't get invited to those boardrooms the member for Whitlam gets invited to, so I would have no idea what goes on inside those hallowed wood-panelled walls with the deep blue carpet on the 60th floor of some CBD office building. Indeed, it's difficult to know whether some of these associations would even know what their members thought. Because as the member for Goldstein pointed out, and I can't believe he is not here to hear this speech, but that would be typical—we all have to listen to him! When he asked industry super representatives, as they propounded to us what their members are thinking, how they knew, their answer was: 'Well, we conduct advertising.' Yes, we understand that you tell them what they should be thinking. Then the member for Goldstein asked: 'But how do you know what they want?' And they said, 'Well, we advertise to them and then we do research to find out whether our advertising is having an impact on their views.' In other words, the very people who are informing the member for Whitlam how he should stand on this bill are the very same people whose idea of consultation is talking at people through television sets.

So I wonder, truly wonder, if we were really here in the interests of workers and employees who have not had their superannuation paid by employers—people who, through no fault of their own, have been unable to pay this or didn't realise that they were meant to have paid for these things—whether we would be voting against this or whether we'd be voting in support of it or whether we would be coming into the parliament and making the umpteenth joke about a World War II movie that hasn't screened since the 1960s? Because that's what goes for policy on that side of the House when it comes to these important issues.

If those opposite really care about workers and their entitlements, if you really care about reuniting them with the money that they're owed, if you really are genuinely concerned about getting the right outcome for everyone involved in this process, then you wouldn't move motions that the speaker no longer be heard, you wouldn't be playing parliamentary games
and you wouldn’t be making references to World War II movies and somehow alternating between ‘dirty dozens’ and ‘unseemly dozens’, and who knows what else. You wouldn’t be trying to make a joke of this; you’d actually ask members what they really thought. You wouldn’t say that consultations are just advertising to them and you would start to make a real effort to pass legislation like this that allows and enables employers to get on with the job of paying money back and that allows the ATO to get on with the job of prosecuting those who won’t.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (11:30): Firstly, I thank those members who have contributed to this debate. The government is acting to improve the integrity of the superannuation guarantee. With the introduction of near real-time reporting on superannuation guarantee obligations and payments, the ATO is able to detect and act on the nonpayment of workers entitlements much more effectively going forward. The SG Integrity Package also gave the ATO greater enforcement powers to collect SG charge liabilities from unscrupulous employers. But these measures do not address historical noncompliance.

To address this problem, this bill offers a once-off opportunity to employers to come forward, pay their workers what they are owed and wipe the slate clean. Employers have from 24 May 2018 until six months after this bill receives royal assent to voluntarily come forward and disclose their historical noncompliance without being subjected to penalties. This is the only chance employers will get to come forward and receive concessional penalty treatment. After the amnesty concludes, the ATO will take a dim view of those employers that could have come forward but failed to do so. Those employers will be subjected to penalties equal to at least 100 per cent of their noncompliance. I commend this bill to the House.

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

The House divided. [11:36]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................63
Noes ......................76
Majority ...............13

AYES

Albanese, AN  Aly, A
Bandt, AP Bird, SL
Bowen, CE Burns, J
Butler, MC Butler, TM
Byrne, AM Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD Coker, EA
Collins, JM Conroy, PM
Dick, MD Dreyfus, MA
Elliot, MJ Fitzgibbon, IA
Freelander, MR Georganas, S
Giles, AJ Gorman, P
Gosling, LJ Hayes, CP
Hill, JC Husic, EN

CHAMBER
AYES
Jones, SP
Kearney, G
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
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Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

NOES
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Coulton, M
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Fletcher, PW
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Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Simmonds, J
Stevens, J

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Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
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Falinski, JG
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Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kerry, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Sharma, DN
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS

CHAMBER
Question negatived.

**The SPEAKER (11:40):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided. [11:40]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 77
Noes ...................... 61
Majority .................. 16

### AYES

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AYES
Webster, AE
Wilkie, AD
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

NOES
Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vanvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Zappia, A

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilson, JH

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

The SPEAKER (11:44): (In division)—The member for Clark, seeking to raise a point of order?

Mr Wilkie: Mr Speaker, I'm just ensuring that the tellers are aware that I've changed sides.

The SPEAKER: Yes. They've done a full count—it's okay.
Third Reading

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (11:45): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (11:45): As I said a few moments ago, Australia's system of occupational superannuation is something that most Australians are very, very proud of. There is $2.8 trillion in worker capital. These are savings that Australians have put aside to fund a dignified retirement. But it is providing additional benefits to 15 million Australians and to our national economy. It is providing money to invest in domestic infrastructure and it is providing funds which are earning overseas remittances because our superannuation funds are investing in infrastructure and shares overseas.

Against this background you'd think our superannuation system would be something that members opposite could find a cause to celebrate in. But, no! Speaker, after speaker, after speaker continues to fight the battles of the last decade. We note that there is not a member opposite who voted in favour of the increase in superannuation from 9½ per cent to 12 per cent when the matter was last before the parliament. We know that they opposed it. In fact, we know that the coalition parties have opposed every single statutory increase to superannuation when they've had the opportunity to vote for it in this House. So they have form.

But when you look at the performance of our superannuation, well into its 30th year now, you would think they could look at that and say: 'Do you know what? I voted against it, but, against all the evidence, we were wrong. We've got to get behind this, because it's good for the workers and it's good for our national economy.' But, no! Speaker after speaker after speaker commit to fighting the battles of the last decade. Somehow, they think that every bill that has the word 'superannuation' on it is an opportunity to reheat the culture wars between the retail funds and the industry funds. We don't believe there should be a battle between the industry funds and the retail funds. We believe that the only measure of whether superannuation is good or bad is its performance on behalf of the members of the fund.

Yes, it is true, that certain sectors of the superannuation industry didn't fare very well in the Productivity Commission's review of the performance and effectiveness of superannuation. Yes, it is true. Yes, it is true that certain sectors of the industry didn't perform very well in the Hayne royal commission into banking, insurance and financial services. It is true; but you won't hear the member for Mackellar talking about that, you won't hear the member for Goldstein talking about that and you won't hear the member for Hughes talking about that. You won't hear them talking about that, because they are committed to fighting the old culture wars and the old battles of yesteryear.

They see occupational superannuation somehow as a conspiracy. They see it as a conspiracy. They somehow reject the fact that ordinary working people are saving through occupational superannuation for a dignified retirement, it's true. I rather suspect that the thing that really, really offending them, the thing that really sticks in their craw, is the fact that occupational superannuation has seen a bust-up of the old, exclusive chaps' club where members of boards are appointed by previous members of boards, where the old school tie somehow dictates whether you find your way through the upper echelons of the financial sector. It is true that occupational superannuation has seen new entrants to the finance
industry, and aren't we better off for it? There are now more women in senior positions in the superannuation industry. There are now more women in senior positions in the finance sector. More women are finding their way onto boards within the banking and finance sector, and isn't that a good thing? This $2.8 trillion worth of occupational superannuation was a gift to the country by previous Labor governments. They have opposed it at every single opportunity. They've had a chance to stand in this House and vote that workers get an increase in their superannuation and they have opposed it. You'd think the evidence would be enough, but no.

On current settings, if the superannuation guarantee legislation stays unamended by those opposite, a worker in the workforce today will retire with a superannuation balance of somewhere between $300,000 and $600,000. That has to be a great thing. They get some dignity in retirement—less reliance of the pension. Perhaps they will have the ability to pay off a mortgage that they were unable to completely pay off during the course of their working life, because people are taking on a mortgage later and later on in life these days. Perhaps they'll have some money to put away to deal with healthcare concerns that they have as they approach their older years. These have got to be seen as good things. Between $300,000 and $600,000 in average retirement savings through their superannuation account. Do you know what the only threat to that is, Deputy Speaker? The only threat to that, because this mob over here who are running an insurgent campaign, because they don't believe—

Mr Tim Wilson interjecting—

Mr STEPHEN JONES: He makes a lot of noise but not a lot of sense. The member for Goldstein seems to think that it's okay for him to take home 15 per cent superannuation but the person who cleans his office is not worth it. He thinks he's worth 15 per cent but the person who cleans his office is not worth it.

When they drop their kids off to the childcare centre in the morning, they get back into their car knowing that they're earning 15 per cent superannuation but the childcare workers aren't worth it. The childcare workers aren't worth it. When they go and pick up their coffee in the morning, they're comfortable in the knowledge that they're getting 15 per cent but the person who's making them a cup of coffee is not worth it. That is literally what they are arguing. Not one of them is saying: 'I'll forgo my 15 per cent. I'll go back to 9½. But for the people who clean my office, who look after my kids and who make my coffee in the morning, 9½ is good enough for them. We will fight you every step of the way. If you are silly enough to fall in line with these clowns over here, then go your hardest. We won't fall for it. This is a gift to the Australian people, which you have opposed every step of the way. Every step of the way!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird): Can I just say to the House and all contributors that I don't have a position on anything. You can refer comments through the chair, not at the chair. The question before the chair is the bill be read a third time. All those in agreement say aye, those against no. I declare the ayes have it. The noes have it?

Honourable members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House will not yell at the occupant of the chair! Minister?
Mr Chester: A point of order, Deputy Speaker: when you called for the noes, only one voice was heard.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: To assist the House and to ensure that the view of the House is expressed, I'll ask the question again. Those in agreement say aye. Those against say no. The ayes have it.

Honourable members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The noes have it? A division is required. Ring the bells.

The SPEAKER: The question is that this bill be now read a third time.

The House divided. [11:59]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 76
Noes ...................... 60
Majority ............... 16

AYES
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McCVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Webster, AE
Wilkie, AD
Wilson, TR
House of Representatives
Thursday, 28 November 2019

AYES
Wood, JP
Young, T
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

NOES
Aly, A
Bandt, AP
Bird, SL
Bowen, CE
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Byrne, AM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Collins, JM
Conroy, PM
Dick, MD
Dreyfus, MA
Elliot, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA
Freelander, MR
Georganas, S
Giles, AJ
Gorman, P
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Hill, JC
Husic, EN
Jones, SP
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
Khalil, P
King, CF
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
McBride, EM
Mitchell, BK
Mitchell, RG
Mulino, D
Murphy, PJ
Neumann, SK
O’Connor, BPJ
O’Neil, CE
Owens, JA
Payne, AE
Perrett, GD
Phillips, FE
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Smith, DPB
Snowdon, WE
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Templeman, SR
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Thwaites, KL
Vamvakinou, M
Watts, TG
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH
Zappia, A

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill 2019
Second Reading

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel and Deputy Leader of the House) (12:02): I present the explanatory memorandum to this bill and move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I rise today to introduce the Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill 2019. The bill would amend the Defence Service Homes Act 1918 to expand eligibility to the Defence Services Homes Insurance Scheme to all current and former members of the Australian Defence Force who have at least one day's continuous full-time service.
As the Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel, I recognise the Australian community has a clear expectation that our veterans and members of the Defence Force, as well as their families, will be well looked after. Of course, as a government we are absolutely committed to putting veterans and their families first. On 24 April this year, the government announced that expanded eligibility for the Defence Services Homes Insurance Scheme would commence from 1 January 2020. This expansion will close existing gaps and ensure all current and former members of the ADF are eligible for home building insurance under the scheme, regardless of the type of service they have undertaken.

The bill will ensure that reservists, peacekeepers and widows and widowers who are currently ineligible for the scheme will have access. The expansion of eligibility will mean that more ADF members and veterans will be able to access low-cost home building insurance, particularly in regional Australia and high-peril risk areas such as northern Australia. The amendments will be modern legislative provisions which will align the scheme to the Australian government's policy of supporting all veterans who have served, regardless of their type or length of service, in recognition of their sacrifice and service to the nation. These amendments are all about putting veterans and their families first. I commend this bill to the House.

Leave granted for second reading debate to continue immediately.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (12:05): I'm pleased to speak on the Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill 2019, and I move:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House criticises the Government for failing to:

(1) address the high number of veterans experiencing homelessness, as highlighted by recent reports from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute;

(2) fix Australia's broken aged care services for veterans, as highlighted by the current Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety; and

(3) respond to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's northern Australia insurance inquiry recommendations to urgently fix the wider crisis in the northern Australia insurance market".

Labor joins with the government in recognising the unique place in which the men and women of Australia's ADF and veterans generally are held in the hearts of Australians. We honour them for the contribution they have made to our country's defence and, as we are seeing now, to emergency management in facing bushfires, cyclones, floods et cetera. The Australian community has an expectation that veterans and members of the Defence Force and their families will be looked after and treated well in a manner consistent with the sacrifices they've made on behalf of us, our children and our children's children. Labor is committed to recognising the unique nature of the service and the sacrifices of those concerned. The Australian parliament is passing this legislation, we think, with our support, although there is an amendment which we hope the government will accept.

The Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill 2019 will amend the legislation that currently operates—the Defence Service Homes Act 1918—to expand eligibility for concessional homebuilding insurance under the Defence Service Homes Insurance scheme for all current and former members of the Australian Defence Force who have served at least one
day's continuous service from 1 January 2020. Currently, the scheme is restricted to ADF personnel with warlike service or at least four years service, or eight years for reservists, and widows and widowers of these individuals. This expansion of eligibility is designed to close existing gaps and ensure that all current and former members of the ADF are eligible for homebuilding insurance under the scheme, regardless of the type of service they've undertaken. Reservists, peacekeepers, widows and widowers will be eligible under the scheme, and that's a good thing. This will streamline eligibility requirements and recognise all those who have served our nation, meaning more ADF members and veterans will be able to access low-cost homebuilding insurance.

ADF members who are posted to regional or northern Australia who are not eligible for the scheme face significantly higher homebuilding insurance premiums and, consequently, increased cost of living pressures. In some instances, ADF members may be unable to secure insurance cover for their home. This is a particular problem in my home state of Queensland and in the northern parts of Australia, which are subject to cyclones, floods and now, tragically, also bushfires. The ADF has a large presence in northern Australia, particularly in areas like Townsville, in my home state of Queensland, which is home to Lavarack Barracks, where there are around 4,600 ADF members posted. We know those opposite don't like to talk about climate change, but we know from experience that climate science says that northern Australia is generally more disaster prone, with greater exposure and frequency of adverse weather and actual disasters and to more-extreme events such as cyclones, tropical storms and floods. ADF members and veterans therefore face higher insurance premiums as a result of being posted to bases like HMAS Cairns, Robertson Barracks in Darwin or RAAF Base Tindal in Katherine in the Northern Territory when compared to regions in southern Australia. This increases cost-of-living pressures on ADF members who are posted to these locations and subsequently establish family homes in these regions and who, indeed, may settle there after their posting has been completed.

These changes will help reduce costs faced by ADF members, veterans and their families and provide greater peace of mind for deploying members and their remaining spouse and family should an adverse event occur and an insurance claim is warranted. I note the scheme is a highly valued benefit among veterans communities and ADF members, so expanding it in this way will serve as a useful defence recruitment and retention tool.

These amendments are a consequence of the recent change to the definition of 'veteran'. Historically, the term 'veteran' was only applied to those with active service and those who only served at home being called ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen. With the introduction and expansion of Non-Liability Mental Health Care, the definition has now changed so that anyone who has served one day of full-time service in the ADF is classified as a veteran. We agree with that. These changes will align the Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme with the policy of supporting veterans who have served regardless of the type or length of service, in recognition of the sacrifice they've made in the interests of the nation. These amendments will mean better outcomes for defence personnel, veterans and their families, especially in the regions, and that's why Labor supports them.

I've made a number of amendments in the motion I have moved. They deal with issues such as the high number of veterans experiencing homelessness, as highlighted by recent reports; the broken aged-care services for veterans, which was highlighted by the Royal
Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety; and the failure of the government to respond to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's northern Australia insurance inquiry recommendations to urgently fix the wider crisis in the northern Australia insurance market, which, as I've outlined already in this speech, affects veterans. I moved that motion, as I foreshadowed earlier, criticising the government's failure in a number of areas affecting veterans and the Australian community more broadly, especially in northern Australia.

First, it must be said that the good measures in this bill stand in stark contrast to the government's complete failure and inaction when it comes to the plight of homeless veterans. As I mentioned in the House last night, it would be remiss not to note the alarming findings of the recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute reports. The AHURI report showed that veterans are almost three times as likely to experience homelessness as the general population, with 5.3 per cent of veterans homeless in any given 12-month period compared to the national average of 1.9 per cent. This is an indictment on the way we treat our struggling veterans, many of whom find themselves in poverty and, therefore, in homelessness. It shows that far too many are falling through the cracks and that support services are failing some of our most vulnerable people. Veteran homelessness is a national shame, and the government needs to do more to tackle this crisis.

Previously we have seen figures that one in 10 people who sleep rough are actually veterans. I recently met with the board of the New South Wales RSL—last week, in fact—and they noted that there is a 25 per cent increase in the number of veterans who are seeking their help. But it's not just about homelessness; it's about mental health and wellbeing and suicide prevention more broadly, because these conditions and these situations often go together. The fact is the government needs to do more to support current service personnel when it comes to transitioning out of the ADF and into civilian life, through assistance with health, mental health, employment and financial service and advice.

There have been a number of reports into veteran mental health in recent years, most notably the recent Productivity Commission review of the veteran support system in this country. We know that the government plans to release a response to this report and a veteran mental health and wellbeing national action plan by the end of the year. That's all well and good, but this is a government which has been in office for three terms, more than six years, and is only now hastily coming up with a plan to address these issues.

On a similar note, as my amendment refers to, the government needs to act to fix Australia's broken aged-care services for veterans. In the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety we heard some harrowing testimony and submissions from veterans and ex-service organisations, who said many veterans feel abandoned and no longer acknowledged for their service when moving into aged care. In its submission the RSL pointed out that, just like the veteran support service and system, navigating the aged-care system run by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Department of Health can be complex and confusing for many veterans and their families. The veterans aged-care home operator RSL Care South Australia told the commission how veterans with mental health issues like post-traumatic stress disorder can age prematurely and require early entry into residential aged care. So we see veterans in aged care facing special challenges and needing tailored support.
In the royal commission hearings, the Secretary to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Liz Cosson, conceded the department needed to do more to help veterans moving from its own low-level aged-care services to the mainstream residential aged-care system run by the Department of Health. What's more, the DVA has admitted it will take years before the two departments' systems, even the DVA's own multiple IT systems, can actually talk to each other. Once again, this underscores the need for better information-sharing between agencies to understand the issues and provide services when and where they are needed.

If we are going to tackle a range of issues affecting veterans, including aged care, homelessness, mental health and suicide prevention, we need better data and joined-up services, and that's not happening now. To that end, as I've said before, Labor supports including a question on military service in the next national census so we know more about where the veterans are, where they're located, how many veterans there are out there and can better deliver support services to them. The fact that this government hasn't done that in three terms shows its failure in this area. I know it's supported by Veterans' Affairs ministers at the state level because I've spoken to numerous of them. On that note, we welcome the secretary's comments that the department needs to do more in the aged-care space, and our veterans deserve better when it comes to aged care.

As per the amendment I've circulated, the government needs to respond to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's northern Australia insurance inquiry recommendations to urgently fix the wider insurance industry in northern Australia insurance markets, which so affects so many veterans at the RAAF bases and the military bases I referred to earlier. It is interesting that the government cited the interim findings of the ACCC inquiry as one of the grounds for this amendment. That inquiry found that consumers in the northern parts of Australia face significantly higher insurance premiums and can often be underinsured when natural disasters hit, so it is commendable the government is addressing this issue for our defence personnel and veterans. But it needs to respond to the ACCC's recommendations and act now to fix this urgent problem and the wider problem of accessibility and affordability of insurance for all consumers in northern Australia.

Since July 2019, the ACCC has been calling on the Morrison government to act on the 28 recommendations to help residents and small businesses in northern Australia who are unable to secure reasonably priced insurance for their homes and businesses. To date, the government has ignored these recommendations and the pleas of locals for action. Even before this latest ACCC report, the Liberal and National Party government here has been promising to fix this crisis for years but has done nothing. As Labor has continually pointed out, even the government's own north Queensland backbenchers, the member for Herbert and Dawson, have grown sick of telling their communities to wait for action and are trying to distance themselves from the government's complete failure to address these issues. Of course, this comes on top of the government's own failures with respect to the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility—or, as we like to call it, the 'ho actual infrastructure fund'.

A full four years after it was set up, the NAIF has only released $44 million, or less than one per cent, of its $5 billion budget, with not one per cent released to projects in my home state of Queensland. Despite this parlous state of affairs, the NAIF board somehow saw fit to approve more than $400,000 worth of bonuses for senior NAIF executives—talk about rewarding poor performance! These bonuses are part of $26.6 million in administrative costs
racked up by the NAIF or nearly 40 per cent of all the funds that have left the NAIF to date. It is an absolute disgrace. The government needs to stop wasting money and start spending money on much needed projects in northern Australia. It's like an episode of Yes Minister or Utopia—an infrastructure facility that hasn't funded any infrastructure. This is a government that talks a big game when it comes to the regions and northern Australia but doesn't deliver much at all.

The government's incompetence, which is holding back jobs and economic development in the north, is very stark. Once again, it shows that across so many policy areas, whether it's veterans, aged care, the regions or the economy, this is a lazy do-nothing government that has no policies and plans for the country, and has failed to deliver for Australia.

As I said earlier, we have a special obligation to help our veterans. We train them, we ask them to put their lives at risk for us and yet we find them sleeping rough or not being properly looked after in their old age. The government needs to do more to address a whole range of challenges affecting our ex-service men and women, especially when it comes to homelessness and aged care, which is precisely why I'm moving a second reading amendment on these issues. Notwithstanding that at least the government's current bill before the chamber means a better outcome for defence personnel veterans and their families, and that's why Labor supports this bill. I commend the bill and the amendment to the chamber.

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (12:20): I'd like to start by addressing some of the falsehoods that the shadow minister decided to throw around just previously, and then I'll talk on this bill as well as suicide prevention, and that all comes into the cost pressures, especially in North Queensland.

We're talking about the NAIF, and I found it quite ironic that someone from the south-east corner would be sitting across from me, pointing and saying that we're not doing anything in the north.

Mr Neumann: What would you know?

Mr THOMPSON: Maybe you should stay in your patch, mate. Because the NAIF has rolled out some projects within North Queensland which include at JCU and at the airport—and the JCU did take quite a while to get over the line because the Labor state government decided to put up roadblocks because that's how it works. It's okay, I'm happy to educate the shadow minister on how the NAIF works a little bit later, because that's not why we're here.

We are here to talk about the Prime Minister's and Minister Chester's announcement that we would extend the eligibility—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr McVeigh): The member for Herbert will resume his seat.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (12:22): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard

The SPEAKER: The question is that the member for Herbert be no further heard.

The House divided. [12:27]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ................... 58
Noes ................... 75
Majority ............... 17
AYES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Keoghan, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilson, JH

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (12:30): I am absolutely disgusted by the member for Greenway's actions to quieten me when I'd clearly said I wanted to talk about veteran suicide. What you've just done is inappropriate and disgusting. Veteran suicide should be bipartisan. We should be working together, not working for cheap political points. Why does this need to happen? We should be working together. I will start by saying only three days ago I got a phone call from a mate in Townsville to tell me another veteran, a friend of mine, had died by suicide only a couple of days before. This is where people in this House should be working together—not running away but working together. Veteran suicide and suicide prevention are all of our business. The political points scoring that we're seeing from those opposite is absolutely disgusting. Suicide prevention is our business.

I'd like to start again and speak about this bill. The Prime Minister, with Minister Chester, announced we would extend eligibility to the Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme to allow any current and former Australian Defence Force member who has had at least one day of service access to home building insurance through the scheme. For the last 100 years the scheme has provided home building insurance to eligible ADF members and veterans in recognition of their service and sacrifice to our nation. Eligibility for insurance under the scheme is currently, broadly speaking, restricted to individuals and their widows and widowers who have seen warlike service or those who are currently serving in the ADF with at least four years service or eight years for reservists.

The amendments proposed to the Defence Service Homes Act, subject to being passed by parliament, will expand the scheme's eligibility requirements to all current and former members of the ADF regardless of their type or length of service. This includes reservists and peacekeepers as well as widows and widowers of individuals. It will reduce the cost of home building insurance for around 350,000 ADF members, veterans and their families and provide cost savings to individuals who take up the scheme's insurance. This will ease the cost of living for those ADF members, veterans and their families, particularly those located in regional and northern Australia, like my electorate of Herbert.
From 1 January 2020, all current or former Australian Defence Force members who've had at least one day of service will be eligible to access the home building insurance scheme through the Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme. Dependent on passing of the legislative amendments, expansion of the scheme's eligibility requirements will come into effect from 1 January. The number of ADF members and veterans who are currently ineligible to access home building insurance through the scheme, as I said before, is estimated to be around 350,000. The impact of this change is expanding the scheme's eligibility requirements, which will address the current disparity in eligibility criteria and recognise the service and commitment of all those who've served the ADF. Approximately 350,000 ADF members and veterans who are currently ineligible for the scheme will be able to access the concessional home building insurance offering.

In Townsville, insurance is a big issue. Only recently, working with the member for Dawson, we got the Assistant Treasurer to come to Townsville to talk about insurance. There are homes that aren't insured and there are also strata that have been told they can't get insurance, so we are working with the insurance companies and CEOs to ensure that people in the north can get affordable insurance. This is just another way we've helped the veterans in my region—definitely in Townsville—who find it hard to get insurance.

The scheme's current eligibility requirements do not recognise all those who have served our nation. As such, the disparity between ADF members and veterans—now we're all called veterans, whether we've done one day of service or we've seen warlike operations—who can and cannot access home building insurance through the scheme based on the individual's type and length of service will be changed. ADF members who are posted to regional and northern Australia are not eligible for the scheme, face significantly higher home building insurance premiums and, consequently, increased cost-of-living pressures. And we know that high cost-of-living pressures can be a cause of veteran suicide, especially around this time of year as we move into Christmas. It's something that we, in this place and the other place, should be working together on—that is, to lower the high cost-of-living pressures and, in turn, lowering our high rate of veteran suicide. (Extension of time granted) I will give credit where credit's due, and I thank the shadow minister at the table, the member for Kingsford Smith, for allowing me to continue, because veteran suicide is a top priority of the government and of everyone in this place, or it definitely should be.

For the vast majority of those serving in the ADF it is an overwhelmingly positive experience, and it's good for the individual, it's good for our community and it's in our national interest. But I want to add that not all veterans are broken; not all veterans are wounded, injured or ill. And for the ones that are, that's okay, because it's about post-traumatic growth. We all have had bad experiences happen in our lives, and the view or the stigma that 'all veterans are broken' is something we need to actively change. I believe that meaningful engagement and meaningful employment gives meaning to one's life. If I can stand before you in this place and talk about my own mental illness and about how we can all work together, I truly believe that in this place, and the other place, we will all work together to lower the high rate of veteran suicide and the high rate of stigma around mental illness and suicide.

A lot of veterans leave the ADF and transition into civilian life successfully, having had a career that has set them up with the skills, training and attitude to succeed. You wouldn't have
to lob a stone very far in this place to hit the veterans here or hit the people who support our veteran community in the challenges that we face. But, veterans work hard—very hard. Veterans are the ones—although there are other people too—who like to get up early and get on with the job. It's important that we recognise the unique nature of military service, the strength we have within our veteran cohort and the opportunities that should arise from their service.

But like all Australians, our defence personnel are not immune from mental health challenges and the tragedy of suicide. This is pertinent and relevant to me; I was told only a couple of days ago a friend had died by suicide. Suicide in the serving and ex-serving community is a very serious and complex issue, and the government, with the crossbench, are working hard to ensure Defence Force members are supported both in and out of service, and that there are wraparound services to help the families. This does include breaking the stigma surrounding mental health. Only yesterday, Open Arms reached out to the family of our mate who died by suicide. They got counselling straightaway. It's extremely important that we acknowledge the good work of Open Arms as well as other mental health and wellbeing services around the country. All veterans and their families are eligible to call Open Arms if they're in distress, or if they just need a chat.

Every year, more than 5,500 people leave the military, so improving the transition experience is vital. Just as enlistment is an important part of the ADF, transition back into civilian life is equally important. There needs to be a soft landing on the way out. There has to be a transition process that ensures our veterans don't just fall on their face. There has to be, once again, bipartisan support for working with those transitioning to ensure that people leaving the military feel as good as when they went in, or, if they don't, that they move into something meaningful in their life.

Regardless of time served, members can now access coaching, including career planning, full service documentation, skills recognition, resume preparation, job search programs and financial literacy education. Former ADF members are able to access this support, including employment support, for up to 12 months after transition. I think it's a great step forward to have the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Awards, which encourage organisations, and definitely defence industry, to employ veterans, our former serving people. We're the ones who use the equipment, the ones who take it on operations or use it back here in Australia, so veterans are very well equipped to work in defence industry. I spoke to defence industry primes only a couple of days ago, and my words to them were: 'Hire more veterans, because the skill sets they bring will reward your business tenfold.'

In recent years this government has focused on supporting the mental wellness of veterans and their families. That support includes a $5 million investment in The Oasis Townsville, as well as other organisations around the country, which brings all organisations under one roof. It keeps everyone together. It helps veterans and their families find the support they need quickly so they can get back out there and get on with their lives. It's very important that we're talking about cost-of-living pressures with this, because lowering cost-of-living pressures can only help veterans. It's something I've been working very closely with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs on, as well as with Liz Cosson, the department's secretary. I think we all know that we need to relieve as much pressure as we can because, if the bills stack up and
times are tough, especially at this time of the year, it is hard for veterans out there—especially in North Queensland, my patch.

I thank you for the opportunity, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I thank the chamber for granting me extra time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr McVeigh): On behalf of the chamber, I thank the member for Herbert.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (12:43): The Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme offers ADF members, veterans and their widows a range of insurance products with broad coverage and often little or no excess. The Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill 2019 expands eligibility for coverage under the insurance scheme to include all current and former members of the Australian Defence Force, including reservists and peacekeepers, who have completed at least one full day of service. Currently, ADF members are required to complete varying periods of service before they are accepted into the defence home insurance scheme. Other ADF members and veterans ineligible for the scheme are required to pay higher home building insurance premiums as a consequence of being based in high-peril risk locations, including across northern Australia.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has been investigating the pricing and availability of insurance for consumers in northern Australia since 2017. The ACCC’s first interim report, released in December 2018, found 'home, contents and strata premiums are, on average, considerably higher in northern Australia than the rest of Australia' and that they have increased sharply in recent years in light of a series of natural disasters, such as Cyclone Debbie in 2017. While home and contents insurance prices rose by 50 per cent across Australia between 2008 and 2018, prices rose by 130 per cent for the same period in northern Australia. In real terms, insurance premiums in northern Australia ranged between $2,200 and $4,000 per annum while the national average is around $1,300 per annum. One factor in the high insurance schemes is the lack of competition. The insurance market in northern Australia is concentrated, with some regions dominated by a single insurer. This bill will provide another choice to those ADF members and their families who have made their homes in northern Australia. The bill highlights the often overlooked financial implications that accompany a life of service, and I hope the concessional home building insurance provided through the scheme will go some way to reduce the costs of living faced by veterans and their families.

There is also an emotional and social cost for those families who uproot themselves from close family and friends to follow their loved one to a new Army, Air Force or Navy base in a new town or even a new state. One small thing the ADF can do to help with the stress of relocating is provide those families with an opportunity to spend quality time together. The Army Amenities Fund Company, which is administered by the Army Amenities Fund Board, operates a series of holiday homes across the country for this very purpose. In South Australia, the board administers three small holiday homes in Goolwa, a small coastal town on the southern Fleurieu in my community of Mayo. Notwithstanding that the Goolwa properties are the only amenities in South Australia, the ADF members and their families and the board decided to commence a detailed scoping for the sale of the Goolwa properties in August this year.
Last month I met with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs to discuss the possible sale of the Goolwa properties and the implications for veterans and their families in South Australia. I've been advised by the minister's office that the decision to review the viability of the Goolwa properties was based on the low Army user profile rate and low overall occupancy over the past 10 years. I really do find it very difficult to accept that there would be a low usage rate on those properties. Goolwa is a highly desirable place to holiday. I was further advised that the board is conscious of providing high-quality, economically priced holiday accommodation and has decided the proceeds from the potential sale of the Goolwa properties will be used to purchase properties in other areas more popular with personnel. But it's unclear whether this would be at another location in South Australia, let alone on the Fleurieu. South Australian veterans deserve holiday properties in South Australia. Mayo and the Fleurieu are incredibly popular holiday destinations and they are easier to get to. I would urge the government and the board to keep these properties. If you are determined to sell the properties, please replace them with properties nearby. It's unclear, as I said, whether we will have any of these homes left in South Australia. If that were to occur, it would be a great shame. I understand that the sale of the properties will require ministerial approval. I urge the minister to consider the views of the local community, the RSL clubs across the Fleurieu region and current and former ADF members across South Australia when making the decision. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel and Deputy Leader of the House) (12:48): In summing up, I want to thank all members who have contributed to the debate today and acknowledge the continued tradition of bipartisan support for the veteran community demonstrated by the opposition and the crossbench on legislation of this nature. The Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill 2019 expands eligibility to the Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme to all current and former members of the ADF and will close existing gaps in eligibility. It ensures that currently ineligible reservists and peacekeepers will have access to the scheme, as will widows and widowers. These amendments will mean better outcomes for veterans and their families, particularly in regional Australia and high peril risk areas such as northern Australia, where they will be able to access low cost home building insurance. This is about putting veterans and their families first—now and into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided. [12:54]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................58
Noes .................76
Majority .............18

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Burns, J
Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Butler, MC
AYES

Butler, TM
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Khalil, P
King, MMH
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Piibersek, TJ
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

Byrne, AM
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS
Thursday, 28 November 2019

Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel and Deputy Leader of the House) (12:58): I seek leave of the House to move the third reading immediately.

Leave not granted.

Mr CHESTER: I move:
That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the motion for the third reading being moved without delay.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion moved by the minister be agreed to.

The House divided. [13:03]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................77
Noes ......................55
Majority ..................22

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA

AYES

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Bachholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR

CHAMBER
AYES

Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Simmonds, J
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Webster, AE
Wilkie, AD
Wilson, TK
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Sharma, DN
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

NOES

Aly, A
Bower, CE
Butler, TM
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Khalil, P
King, MMH
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE

Bird, SL
Burns, J
Byrne, AM
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
O’Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Question agreed to.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel and Deputy Leader of the House) (13:05): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority Board and Other Improvements) Bill 2019

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (13:06): I rise to speak on the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority Board and Other Improvements) Bill 2019. I move:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House criticises the Government for repeatedly failing to legislate on agricultural matters in a timely manner".

At first glance, there is nothing particularly controversial about this bill, but it does indeed contain some quite controversial matters—the least not being the establishment of an advisory board for the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority and the relocation of that very authority from here in Canberra to Armidale, in the electorate of the member for New England, with all the consequences of that politically charged decision and led of course by the member for New England.

What a coincidence it is that the authority was not moved to the Hunter electorate, or to the Parkes electorate or to the Hinkler electorate or to the electorate of Lyne. No, it was moved to the electorate of the member for New England. I'm sure all those other members I've just mentioned—and the members for Nicholls and Maranoa—could have had the APVMA as well, but, no, it went to the electorate of the then Minister for Agriculture. I won't use his name, because that's unparliamentary.

But the core of this bill is to reform and make more efficient the process for regulating and approving veterinary medicines and the chemical sprays we rely on so heavily in the agriculture sector to protect our crops and our livestock, and of course to deal with invasive weeds and pests. That extends right through to domestic companion animals; when you take your pet to the vet, they use medicines which are regulated by the APVMA. So it is a very
important institution. Of course, the opposition agrees with the components of the bill which are designed to streamline those processes and to maximise the benefit of the work of the authority for rural and regional Australia—for the agriculture sector and indeed for Australians more generally. As I said, we all benefit from a system that delivers these agvet chemicals, as we call them, in a timely and effective way.

The APVMA is a body which has always struggled. It is typical of a government entity—too often underresourced and with all the difficulties that come with that for those dedicated people who work in our Public Service. One of the interesting things about the APVMA, of course, is that it relies on the recruitment and retention of highly professional and trained regulatory scientists and lawyers who work in an area quite unique and rare. They themselves are rare professionals, and even prior to the relocation of the APVMA the authority was struggling to secure and retain the staff it needs.

So you can imagine the impact when the former minister announced that he was packing the authority up and moving it to Armidale, so far away. Immediately, a very large number of people—I don't have the numbers with me today, but I've cited them in this place before—left the authority. Some of them were easily replaceable because they were working in areas where that skill level is more common. But with respect to the regulatory people—the scientists, the lawyers—it was obviously a far more difficult task. If I remember correctly, it forced the authority to go on a global search for those professionals, because too many of them here in Canberra—who of course have partners also working in the Public Service or elsewhere in Canberra, and who typically had kids in schools here in Canberra—decided not to take up the offer to move to Armidale, but to stay here and easily secure a job anywhere they liked. Obviously there are some very big corporate players in this space that would give just about anything to secure some of the very, very competent, professional and highly qualified people we had, and still have, in the APVMA.

The extraordinary thing is that things got so bad at one point that the government decided to breach its own government policy order—the order which determined that the APVMA could no longer be based in Canberra. This is the instrument that was used to relocate the authority. The Minister for Finance said that the authority could not operate within 100 or 150 kilometres of Canberra—I forget—and had to be within so many kilometres of a regional university. Those distances were interesting, because it didn't leave too many options other than Armidale, as you could imagine, although there were a couple of other areas that should have qualified and did qualify. I think Toowoomba may have been one of them—I might stand corrected. There were a few options, but it was obvious from day one that it was always going to be going to Armidale in the electorate of the member for New England. Again, that policy order says it can't be in Canberra. The APVMA can't work in Canberra. They can't congregate in Canberra. I remind people that at one stage they were meeting in a McDonald's in Armidale, but they weren't allowed to congregate in Canberra. Then, of course, the government decided that it was not working, so, in breach of their own policy order, they started allowing some of these highly professional people to work in Canberra—surprise, surprise. I don't have an updated figure, but I think there could be up to 50 people now with the APVMA working here in Canberra in clear breach of the government's own policy order.

When we asked about this in committee, Dr Parker, the CEO—the member for New England's hand-picked CEO—informed us that he had legal advice to suggest he could do...
this. Now, have a think about that. I ask members—it's very nice to have so many of them here today—to think about that. The former member puts in place a policy order that says you can't work for the APVMA in Canberra, and when it doesn't work, as we predicted, the CEO starts employing people in Canberra. And when we ask in committee, 'How is this so?' the CEO says, 'Oh, I've got legal advice to say I can do that.' Well, the first question is: why did he need to do that?

Mr Joyce:  It works very well, actually.

Mr FITZGIBBON:  I hear the member for New England interject. He says it's working very well. The first question is: why did he have to work outside the government's own policy order? If he has legal advice, you'd think he might like to share it with us, Mr Deputy Speaker. You'd think he might like to share it with us, but no, he couldn't do that. This is so typical of this government. We're not allowed to see the coalition agreement. The Australian people don't deserve to see the very agreement that allows this mob to form a government. No, we can't do that! Secrecy under this government has reached a new, low ebb. We couldn't see the legal advice. As we speak, we have 50 people working for the APVMA in Canberra because, as we predicted, they weren't able to establish the workforce in Armidale.

Police investigations are pretty topical at the moment. I haven't made any phone calls—I just want to make that declaration now. I haven't made any phone calls. There is an ongoing police investigation into the APVMA relocation in Armidale, because it seems, and I make no assertions, to find a block of dirt big enough to accommodate the building required—the building which no doubt is not quite full, because 50 people are still working in Canberra—they needed two blocks of dirt, not one. They had one block of dirt, but not two. The problem was there was a nightclub on one of them. They weren't able to build the complex on one block. They needed the two. I don't know about assertions about the coincidence—it may be just that—but somehow the nightclub burnt down just at the right time for the Commonwealth to pick up the second block and build this new building in the electorate of the member for New England. Because I've made no phone calls, and wouldn't dream of making a phone call, I don't know where that investigation is up to, what the substance of the investigation is and whether it's likely to come to any certain conclusions. I don't know because I haven't made the phone call. We do know, and this is not a secret, that the main suspect in the fire died very shortly after. So the police lost its key witness in the investigation, but it is ongoing. In fact, I think it may have transferred from the New South Wales police to the Federal Police. I might stand corrected on that. But the investigation is ongoing.

This relocation to Armidale has been somewhat of an eventful one—in fact, a very, very eventful one. The question is whether those who rely on the APVMA to ensure that they receive their ag chemicals in a timely way, have benefited in any way. Of course, the answer is no. The answer is clearly no.

By the way, I've seen Dr Parker regularly at the airport flying to Canberra. He was going to be located in Armidale, we were assured of that. He probably does have a house or a flat or duplex in Armidale I suspect. But I see him flying to Canberra a lot.

Mr Thistlethwaite:  He could have that million dollar bill.

Mr FITZGIBBON:  He might have the million dollar bill, city council style. Maybe they got the numbers confused. By any measure, the APVMA has only served a purpose for one
person, and he's sitting over there, the member for New England. I'm probably doing him a
favour, because no doubt he runs around Armidale claiming a victory for this wonderful thing
that he did for his town.

We fight without limit for our communities, but we don't do it at the expense of the nation.
We don't do it at the expense of our farmers. We don't do it at the expense of our vets and
those who have companion animals. That's not what we do. We try to grow the country
economically and share the bounty. That's what we do. What the member for New England
get away with is a disgrace, and I hope this type of thing is never seen again in the rest of the
history of this Federation.

This bill seeks to establish an advisory board for the APVMA. The member for New
England has been sitting over there shouting out that the APVMA is working 'wonderfully'
since its relocation in Armidale. I don't believe that's true, and there are plenty of numbers and
metrics to show that that's not true. However, he can't have it both ways. If the APVMA is
working so wonderfully, why does it need an advisory or governance board? Is it an advisory
board or a governance board? Whatever it's called in the bill, why does it need this new board
oversight? We had one of these once before—

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr FITZGIBBON: Thank you, it is a governance board. I think it was called an advisory
board. The government of the day got rid of it—to be honest, I don't remember which one it
was—because it wasn't necessary. This mob are always going on about red tape and
duplication. We didn't need the advisory board and we don't need the governance board. What
is it going to do? The EM is very poor at explaining it—something about the CEO not being
able to undertake all the tasks and roles expected of the CEO.

I'll tell you what: Kareena Arthy, the former CEO, who is a highly respected public servant
in this capital city, was doing it just fine. Before the relocation, she was bringing those
numbers down at a rate of knots and making sure that agvet chemicals were being approved
or otherwise in a timely and efficient manner. She was doing a fantastic job. She is probably
the greatest loss as a result of the APVMA relocation. Kareena Arthy could do it okay; why
can't Dr Parker? Why does he need an advisory board?

And here's the rub: the advisory board will cost $600,000 in the first year, and they say
about $400,000 annually thereafter. Well, wouldn't you like to be on that board? It doesn't
sound like there's going to be a lot of work. The question has to be asked, 'In the absence of
any real explanation as to why we need this board, is this more jobs for the boys?'—or, in this
21st century, jobs for men and women? But they're only men and women aligned with the
National Party. As sure as night follows day, watch for the appointments, watch for the
relationships and watch for the paybacks! That's what this advisory board is about.

But who is going to pay this $600,000, and thereafter $400,000 annually? Is the
government paying? No, of course not. Nor should it, because if the government pays then the
taxpayer pays. And in the absence of any rational reason for having this board, we don't want
the taxpayer paying. Nor should they. No, it will be the industry. The important thing to
remember about the APVMA is that it's not government funded. It's a cost-recovery agency.
The big chemical companies who seek to have their products approved pay for that privilege.
So it's cost recovery; it's not paid for by taxpayers. Now they're being told, without any
rational explanation or logical reason for having this board, that they're going to have to stump up another $600,000, and $400,000 annually, so that someone sitting over there can pay back a few mates and create a board for no reason.

The big challenge for the member for New England, when he gets to his feet—and I welcome his participation in the debate—is to tell us exactly what this advisory—sorry, governance—board is going to do, and declare and make a commitment now that he has no idea who the chair is going to be or who is going to sit on that board. We'll see; we'll test him! Is he prepared, in the face of contempt of parliament, to stand up in a few minutes time and tell us absolutely—give us an ironclad guarantee—that the chair of the new governance board hasn't already been selected? That's his big challenge today. That's all he has to do.

We know he agrees with the substantive matters in the bill; we all do. His only challenge, well, there are two, really, is to tell is what's happening up in Beardy Street—and I notice that they've changed the address. The APVMA was on the corner of Beardy and Taylor streets, but when I looked in the annual report today, it's just Taylor Street now. It's just Taylor Street, because they don't want to talk about Beardy Street. That's because the block of land which became vacant because of the fire is of course in Beardy Street. So he's welcome to give us an explanation, or may be some passing observations, about that incident, although it is a police investigation so he should be really careful. Once the police launch an investigation, you should stay out of it as a member of parliament! So I'm urging him to be very cautious in his comments. But he might want to reflect on the incident and talk about any relationships he might have with the owners of that site.

But the key thing he has to tell us is to give us the assurance that he does not know, given that the governance board isn't in place yet and won't be until this legislation is passed—it has to run the gauntlet of the Senate yet—who the chair of the governance board is going to be. That's the only test he needs to meet. I know he can't meet the first test; he's not going to persuade us that the relocation of the APVMA has been a good thing for our farmers. There is no way. Remember, he was going to have a centre of excellence in Armidale. I don't know what happened to that; it's just the APVMA. There is no centre of excellence and nothing else has been done.

He then wanted to run a regulatory scientist course for people who might work at the APVMA. You don't go to the APVMA after an undergrad; it doesn't work like that. But he might want to tell us about how well that course is going, because I think it's struggling as well, and it's certainly lacking government support and funding. Great idea. 'Give it to you and Ian, and best of luck,' he said, with no real support for the offer he made to the UNE. There's your challenge, Member for New England. You get up and tell us about the new governance board. Tell us what it's going to do and—if you know—who's going to be on it. If you don't know who's going to be on it, well, just say so.

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

Mr Thistlethwaite: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

Mr JOYCE (New England) (13:25): I'd like to start by quoting from the quarterly report for April to June 2019. The APVMA commenced assessments of 764 new applications and finalised 650—

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:26): I move:
That the Member be no longer heard.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that the member be no further heard.

The House divided. [13:30]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .......................... 58
Noes ............................ 76
Majority ....................... 18

**AYES**

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Khahil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
O’Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilson, JH

**NOES**

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coutlon, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA

**CHAMBER**
Question negatived.

The SPEAKER (13:34): It being past 1.30 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Robinson, Dr Aunty Mavis Jean (Mae)

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (13:34): This week I learned of the passing of Aunty Mae Robinson, a remarkable woman. Aunty Mae was an active member of my community, known for her generosity and her passion for teaching and culture. Aunty Mae is a descendant of the Yuin and Gamilaraay people, and a long-time activist with the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council. As a mature-age student, Aunty Mae became the first Aboriginal to graduate from the School of Education—what's known now as Western Sydney University—in 1980. Aunty Mae went on to teach at primary schools in our locality, was involved in the development of the first Aboriginal studies syllabus in Australia and was appointed to education officer and consultancy roles with the New South Wales Department of Education and Training.

Aunty Mae made a significant contribution to the education system and worked tirelessly to provide Aboriginal young people with opportunities and access to education. Barney Glover, the Vice-Chancellor of Western Sydney University, described Aunty Mae as an advocate for the transformative powers of education, noting, 'Her influence as an educator has extended well beyond the Aboriginal community.'
I offer my deepest condolences to Aunty Mae's husband, John, who's been a very close friend of our family, and to their children, Chris, Stephen and Nigel. Aunty Mae Robinson made a difference for the better in our community.

**Berowra Electorate: Arcadia Markets**

**Mr LEESER** (Berowra) (13:36): For many years, the Arcadia Markets have been held at the Arcadia Public School. Conceived in 2009 by the Arcadia Public School P&C, it's both a local community event and a fundraiser. The project was taken on by the energetic and enthusiastic Meegen Gamson, who's built an incredible event from that initial idea. Along with many local school parents, people like the P&C president, Trent Dawson, Kathy Carter-Jones and Carolyn Dawson, Meegen's worked tirelessly to develop the Arcadia Markets into a hugely successful event. There's a very strong sense of community identity in Arcadia, as evidenced by the number of people sporting the 'Proudly Arcadian' t-shirts and carrying the 'Proudly Arcadian' merchandise.

The markets partner with the Old Skool Car Show, coordinated by Geoff Lister, as well as local community groups, including the Arcadia RFS, the Dural and District Historical Society, the Arcadia Pony Club, the Hills Hawks Football Club, the Dance Forte Dance School, the Lucia Beninati School of Ballet and St Columb's Church congregation. The white elephant stall, run by Dale Carn, provides an opportunity to find recycled treasures at bargain prices, with all the funds going to the school. Several local nursery wholesalers, including Overland Nurseries, Cameron's Nursery, Valley View Nursery and Lotsacolour Nursery regularly donate a generous number of plants. The school principal, Sharon O'Brien, also volunteered her time on Arcadia Market day, with a focus this year on viewing the 1994 Time Capsule items. Children were given a strong sense of our local history as they contributed to the new time capsule. The Arcadia Markets are a reflection of the wonderful community spirit of Berowra.

**Robinson, Dr Aunty Mavis Jean (Mae)**

**Ms STANLEY** (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (13:38): I start by acknowledging the traditional owners and First Peoples of the land, particularly elders of my electorate of Werriwa. Today we are mourning the loss of one of our special citizens, Aunty Mae Robinson, a Gamilaraay woman, on Tuesday this week. Aunty Mae endured systematic cultural discrimination, having been born in 1942 in regional New South Wales as an Aboriginal woman. However, she led a cultural revolution in Kempsey and the town became one of engagement, warmth and equality. But, upon being awarded a Commonwealth scholarship, she was then forcibly removed from her family and sent to Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home.

Aunty Mae's career was centred in education in Western Sydney, and she was an elder on the campus at Western Sydney University. In 2018 she was honoured at the university, with the foyer of the new Liverpool campus building being named the Aunty Mae Foyer. Aunty Mae was so eloquent, and was renowned for her grace and humility. She said at the opening:

It's about giving to others. All my life I wanted to be a teacher, and that's what I am, a teacher and a teacher of my culture.

I pass my condolences to her family, particularly her husband, her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.
Domestic and Family Violence

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (13:39): I call on the members of the 46th Parliament to remember what we were elected to do in this place: to respect the institution and to fulfil our responsibility to find solutions. One of the biggest issues facing communities beyond these walls is the scourge of domestic violence. The statistics are horrific. On average, at least one woman dies a week as a result of intimate partner violence. Yet again this morning, we woke to the news of another woman killed. Where is the outrage? Every member of this house has a mother, a wife, a sister or a daughter. I call on this parliament to draw a line and give this issue the urgent attention it deserves, and show our respect to those women and families that we have failed to protect. I will use the remainder of my speaking time in this chamber to pause in silence with my fellow MPs.

Business

Mr YOUNG (Longman) (13:41): There is no doubt that small and medium businesses, which employ nearly 40 per cent of workers in this country, are the backbone of Australia's economy. From your favourite coffee shop down the road from your house to the dry cleaners a couple of blocks away, everywhere you look and everywhere you go there is a business within your community providing a service you probably wouldn't be able to live without.

The electorate of Longman had 13,146 small to medium businesses as of April 2019, all of whom are giving back to their community, where and when they can, and providing important economic significance. The Morrison government has always invested in small and medium businesses. This is evidenced by the fact that business confidence from traders across Australia increased after the results of this year's federal election. It comes down to one word—confidence. The Morrison government's achievements in reducing unemployment and creating jobs in the past few years have helped businesses as more people have disposable income.

As a small business owner myself, I know the challenges, tests and trials that come with being a small business owner. But I also know the rewards. I have seen what the Morrison government has achieved for local businesses over the years, and I know how important it is to have a government that always backs our small and medium businesses. The $30,000 instant asset write-off is just one example of this government's support. The more breaks small businesses can receive, the more people we can employ.

Makin Electorate: Golden Grove Football Club

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (13:42): I congratulate the Golden Grove Football Club on winning the 2019 Good Sports Club of the Year Award for South Australia. The Good Sports Program is a national program with almost 10,000 clubs participating around the nation. Its goal is to build a healthier sporting nation by providing a safe and inclusive environment. Golden Grove Football Club was awarded the honour for inspiring positive change and building a healthy and family-friendly club by implementing policies around alcohol management, tobacco and safe transport. The award was presented yesterday, in a ceremony here at Parliament House, to President Kate Grandey, who was accompanied by her husband, and life member, Mick.

Golden Grove is a relatively new football club. It was established in 1995 and has achieved extraordinary growth and competitive success. It has a strong commitment to junior and women's teams. This year the club fielded 31 junior and eight senior teams, which included
nine women's teams. Three of the club's junior teams were premiers in 2019, with several other teams being runners-up. That success can be directly attributed to the club's professional management, their vision, the support of members and the tireless work of volunteers. I wish the club all the best for the 2020 season and look forward to watching some of their games in the future.

**Extinction Rebellion**

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (13:43): Many in this chamber may have got an email from a mob that call themselves Extinction Rebellion. Some anonymous numpty has taken it upon themselves to send us an email full of blackmail and threats saying they will close down our path to the airport. Well, I have a couple of suggestions. Firstly, stay at school and learn punctuation. They are out there and may want to glue or chain themselves to something. Well, here are some more suggestions. Get yourself down to your local volunteer fire brigade and chain yourself to a fire hose. Stand up with those individuals who show courage and are out there protecting life and property. Chain yourself to a chipper, a rake or a shovel. I know these might be new concepts to you, but there are individuals there who can explain how to use these pieces of equipment in the right way. They will lend you a set of gloves.

I say to those from Extinction Rebellion, who are allegedly out to disrupt and cause problems: how about you pick up some courage and bravery and stand with those individuals who are out there defending life and property right across this country. Volunteer your time for an actual purpose. Make sure you get yourself out, line up, link arms in a firebreak with every single one of these individuals who are, in the most, seniors and retirees, who've taken up their spare time to go and fight fires. Learn some courage, stand against an 80-foot wall of flame with a 40-knot wind behind it and see how you go. Tying yourself on the road and gluing yourself to the bitumen is no way to help this country. Here is an opportunity for you.

**Prime Minister**

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (13:45): How weak is this Prime Minister? He misleads the House in an attempt to cover up the fact that this hopeless government, this tired, third-term government, is so embarrassed by the fact that one of its own ministers won't fess up to the fact that his implausible story about downloading a document from a website is completely wrong. The Prime Minister came in here and misled the House, and then what did he do about it when he was found out? Did he turn up? Did he cop to it? Did he show some actual courage and some spine? Not at all. He showed no spine. What did he do? He sent a note and he sent in the Leader of the House to cover up for him. He won't even turn up.

We invited him to come into this parliament this morning at 9.30 and explain himself, to do what we expect our kids to do when they have done the wrong thing—stand up, take responsibility, do the right thing, cop to it and apologise. But he is so weak and such is his failure of leadership that he can't set an example for the nation. He certainly can't set an example for his own ministers. He can't hold them to the standards that he is responsible for administering because he is too weak to show any leadership. He's been too weak this whole time. The Australian people have found him out. This is a prime minister who cannot stand up for integrity, and he will learn the hard way exactly how wrong that is.
Alfred Hospital

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (13:46): I rise in this place to address some very concerning reports today on the front page of Melbourne's daily newspaper, *The Age*. The paper featured a story entitled 'Doctors call for $2 billion fix as the Alfred crumbles'. This article highlights that Melbourne's leading trauma hospital is in desperate need of repairs. The story reports leaking roofs, cracked walls and wards that flood when it rains. The Alfred hospital is the closest public hospital to my electorate—it's right on the corner of the boundary of Higgins—and three generations of my family have worked as doctors and nurses at the Alfred.

Just last week I had the great honour of awarding Professor John Wilson, who spoke out in the *Age* article, the President's Award at the Australian AMA awards night. He's highly respected in the medical world. But it's not just Professor Wilson who is; all the doctors and nurses who work at the Alfred are top-notch, world-class health professionals and they deserve to have access to world-class facilities. The Alfred is one of Melbourne's leading tertiary hospitals and provides health care for most of Melbourne's southern and eastern communities.

The Andrews Labor government has neglected investment in the Alfred for far too long. How can nurses and doctors give the best care when they don't have the facilities they need to do the job? By not properly investing in the facilities at the Alfred, the Victorian Labor government is potentially putting the health and lives of the Alfred patients at risk. I stand with Professor John Wilson and call on the Victorian Labor government to provide the $2 billion that the Alfred desperately needs to fix its buildings.

Morrison Government

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:48): The government is being run by a bunch of children. The minister for emissions reductions, instead of concentrating on producing policies to actually reduce emissions and reduce skyrocketing electricity prices, is playing childish games, providing fraudulent documents to *The Daily Telegraph* about the travel bill of a local mayor. That's what this government has stooped to. And, when he was caught out, he claimed he knew nothing and he came into this parliament and misled the parliament. He's now dragged the Prime Minister into it, and the minister's cowardice has led to a police investigation: Strike Force Garrad.

Instead of standing down the minister, who clearly breached the Prime Minister's ministerial guidelines, what does this Prime Minister do? Unethically, he rings the New South Wales police minister to try to intervene in the matter and, instead of coming into the parliament and telling the truth, he makes a claim about former Prime Minister Julia Gillard that was based on a false quote from a shock jock rather than a Victorian police officer. Now the Prime Minister refuses to have the gumption and courage to come in here and explain his actions to the Australian people. He refuses to apologise to the Australian people for misleading the parliament. That is the maturity of this government. Someone in this government is not telling the truth, but no-one is brave enough to fess up to the Australian people and tell them exactly what's going on.

Forestry Industry

Mr BROADBENT (Monash) (13:50): I was here when John Howard, Prime Minister, and Michael O'Connor, from the CFMEU Forestry Division, were sorting out the regional forest
agreements for Victoria. Only the member for Lingiari and perhaps Malcolm Mackerras sitting up there would remember the political pain and blood and sweat we went through to get those forest agreements through. They cost $100 million. The unions were at the table, and we had every stakeholder. We designed a system. We used 0.04 per cent of available native forests. We created 74,700 jobs directly and 70,000 jobs indirectly, and it gave a $300 million direct injection to the economy.

This Victorian state government under Daniel Andrews, with his terrible agreement with the Greens, has just gone whoo-hoo—goodbye all your jobs. They don't care about regional Victoria. They never have cared. They're a self-centred city-centred Labor government. They have no care for these workers or for the 25 hardwood mills. We paid the price in the past. We paid for those things to be done. There is absolutely no reason to close down this industry, and the only thing we can do is hope and pray that Michael O'Connor stands up again and says no.

**Morrison Government**

**Mr MARLES** (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (13:51): So how has it come to this? This sorry tale begins with the bumbling Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction using a dodgy, doctored document to take a pot shot at a mayor, and, in the process, he may even have possibly broken the law. Now, in this moment, a wise and competent prime minister would enter the field, clean the matter up and move the show on. But that's not our Prime Minister. Oh, no. Like a moth to the flame with an involuntary reflex, at this moment, our Prime Minister doubles down. He wants to ascertain whether or not an investigation is on foot. He could have asked his department to do that, but, instead, he goes out and phones a friend and rings the New South Wales police commissioner. As Dr Geoffrey Watson, the former counsel assisting ICAC, said, 'It can't be anything else; it must be a favour.'

The Prime Minister of Australia rings the New South Wales police commissioner about an active investigation into one of his ministers. You know what they say—it's not the original act which gets you; it's always the cover-up. And right now out there we've got a stagnant economy, we have one of the worst droughts in our country's history, and all this Prime Minister can do is be the master in a three-ring circus. This is not the government that people hoped for in May. This is not good government. This is just a group of people out here seeking to redefine the Urban Dictionary, because this is the Garrad government.

**Victoria: Forestry Industry**

**Mr PASIN** (Barker) (13:53): One of the great privileges I have in this place is to convene the parliamentary friends of forestry group; I do that with the member for Hunter. He gave me a hug last night; we do that a couple of times a year, just to show the bipartisanship on forestry that we have in this place. We've taken forestry off the battleground, and we're doing this together.

I've got to say: the Australian Forest Products Association gave Labor a better report card than our party in the lead-up to the last election—something that I congratulated Joel on last night. But it's time for the member for Hunter to stand up, pick up the phone and talk to Dan Andrews in Victoria, because Mr Andrews is not taking a bipartisan approach to the ultimate renewable industry. This is the ultimate renewable. Those opposite, in their party, pontificate about how they stand up for the environment and stand up for jobs. Well, here's an
opportunity to do both. Pick up the phone, talk to the Premier of Victoria and say, 'This decision is completely ludicrous.' Not only will it cost jobs in the forestry industry; it will also hurt the environment. This industry is the ultimate renewable. They are carbon sinks, these trees. Victoria takes four trees out of every 10,000. Those opposite are prepared to cost jobs on something like that. It is a disgrace. Pick up the phone, member for Hunter, and get it right!

Prime Minister

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (13:54): How good is integrity? A while back, a lot of people didn't know who Scott Morrison was, so when he took over as Prime Minister he tried to portray himself as the daggy dad from the shire. People are getting to know him now and they're seeing a pattern emerging—and I'm not talking about the pattern where he went into a preselection and got eight votes versus 80 and still managed to slide into the seat! I'm not talking about the pattern where he had six votes and ended up as Prime Minister, when he stabbed the previous Prime Minister in the back. No, I'm talking about the pattern where whenever there is a difficult question he avoids answering it.

First, it was on-water matters. Then it was the Canberra bubble. Then it was, 'It's just gossip'. Now, he refuses to come in here and answer about his minister's misleading of the parliament. Instead, he's prepared to mislead parliament himself about his minister's misleading of the parliament. He is not prepared to account to the Australian people, through the parliament. Instead, he sent a note—the 'dog ate my homework' note—into the parliament. It's no wonder that people are asking the Prime Minister, 'Where the bloody hell are you?' And it's no wonder that they're asking about the phone call to the police commissioner and saying, 'What the bloody hell were you thinking?'

Tasmania: Youth Suicide

Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (13:56): Today, again, I rise to not only highlight the scourge that is youth suicide in Tasmania, but to focus on the efforts of one particularly amazing woman from Northern Tasmania, who has dedicated herself to seeing change.

When Amanda Johnstone from George Town lost a number of friends in short succession to suicide a few years ago, she was understandably devastated. Sadly, in a state that has the highest rate of youth suicide in Australia her experience was far from unique. Determined to reach out to her friends in any way that she could in order to gauge just how everyone was really feeling, Amanda began a group daily check-in on the phone. Every day at 4 pm, each member of the group would rate their own mental wellbeing from one to 10 and send the response to the entire group. This approach soon took off and, seeing the need for this method to be rolled out to the wider community, Amanda launched the free Be A Looper app in 2017, enabling people to check in with five friends daily and grade their mental wellbeing. As Amanda stated, 'We're all on our phones all the time, so it made sense to create something that's already in people's hands.' Amanda's innovative approach recently earned her a place on Time magazine's 2019 Next Generation Leaders list.

Mental health is complex, layered and the responses should be too. I applaud Amanda for helping to save lives.
Prime Minister

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (13:57): This Prime Minister does not like scrutiny—not from journalists, not from the opposition and not from the crossbenches. He's loose with the truth—a serial offender! And when he makes a mistake by misleading parliament, he lacks the courage or integrity to correct the record, in here and in person, and apologise.

This week, under pressure, the real PM Morrison has stood up—an ad man with no plan; a showman, covering up a scam. He's shouty, belligerent and stubborn. He believes different standards should apply to him to those that apply to other Australians. He thinks it's okay to pick up the phone to the head of the New South Wales police because one of his mates is in trouble on the very day an investigation is launched. He pretends he's made of Teflon, fooling himself that nothing will stick, but he is becoming tarnished by his own hubris—his own arrogance, writ large this week for all to see.

There are real issues that Australians want this government to deal with: low wage growth, the increased cost of living and climate change. Instead, he comes here with just a plan to bash unions this week. That was his priority—a plan to bash unions. But because of his own arrogance and lack of accountability, he has had a shocker!

Victoria: Forestry Industry

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (13:59): The Andrews Labor government has been felling Victoria's forestry industries. Each year, only four in every 10,000 trees are harvested from Victorian forests. The Greens, of course, think that's a high number, because it's equivalent to the number of votes that they get! Timber workers are being sold out by Dan Andrews, and so is this Leader of the Opposition. Vote federal Labor, and you get Senator Richard Di Natale. The Leader of the Opposition used to take pride in standing up for workers—no more! Labor MPs can see how his commitment to workers is being woodchipped. Maybe the member for Maribyrnong has traded his knife for an axe. All opposition MPs can now see there's only one word for the growth of the Leader of the Opposition's integrity: timber!

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Prime Minister

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Prime Minister misled parliament while trying to defend a minister who misled parliament. This morning he refused to attend this chamber to correct the record and apologise for misleading the House. Why does the Prime Minister think that the usual standards of integrity and accountability don't apply to him?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:00): I don't accept the assertion that has been put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. On the matters of yesterday that he referred to: with regard to the attribution of a quote, when it was brought to my attention I took immediate action to ensure that the House was informed of that correction.

Mr Albanese: You wrote a letter!
Mr MORRISON: I hear the interjection of the Leader of the Opposition.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left!

Mr MORRISON: The reason I wrote a letter last night is I was on a plane on my way to Sydney for a family event, which the Leader of the Opposition knew well about.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left!

Mr MORRISON: Subsequent to that—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will pause for a second. The members for Oxley, Paterson and Lalor are warned. I just invite members to reflect on what I've said throughout the course of the week with respect to 94(a). I'm not going to detain the House; I will just act very quickly.

Mr MORRISON: That letter, which I authorised, was provided to the House, and it was tabled here by the Attorney-General to ensure that the House was immediately informed of the necessary correction that had to be made. That was followed up with a further letter to the Clerk. As you advised the House last night, Mr Speaker, these are the appropriate forums of the House through which to correct the record. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to take issue with the Speaker on this matter, he is at liberty to do so.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney is warned.

Mr MORRISON: Here we are in question time in the nation's capital, and the Leader of the Opposition is bickering about a quotation in an answer to a question, which has been corrected for the record. This is what the Leader of the Opposition believes are the real issues facing this country.

The tawdry political games that the Leader of the Opposition has been engaged in this House this week found their overreach, particularly today, when the Leader of the Opposition voted that the member for Herbert could no longer be heard when he was speaking on the issue of veteran suicide.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on both sides!

Mr MORRISON: I am sure the Leader of the Opposition deeply regrets—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The level of noise and interjections is far too high. I'm certainly not going to join that level of noise. I will act in a different way. I'm issuing a general warning.

Mr MORRISON: The political games played by the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party this week descended so low as to vote that a veteran of this country speaking about veteran suicide should no longer be heard.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will pause. The member for Sydney will leave under standing order 94(a).
The member for Sydney then left the chamber.

Mr MORRISON: If you look at the ayes and the noes of that motion that that member be no longer heard, at the top of the list is the Leader of the Opposition. I understand the Leader of the Opposition loves the political games—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. In case members don't know what a general warning is: essentially, you've all been warned. The Leader of the Opposition, on a point of order?

Mr Albanese: It goes to relevance. This is about the Prime Minister's actions, and what he is quite extraordinarily talking about is who has been gagged in this House. It's not possible for us to gag any government member—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I understand the point of order that the Leader of the Opposition is making, but I'd also say to him that, with the subject matter of the question and those first couple of sentences that were assertions rather than a question, it does, in those circumstances, open things up.

Mr MORRISON: The Leader of the Opposition has authorised political games in this place which have gagged a veteran of this country speaking about veteran suicide. The Leader of the Opposition should grow up from his political games. He should focus on the real issues that Australians wish to focus on, get over the politics and get on with the policy.

Ms Swanson interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Paterson will leave under standing order 94(a).

The member for Paterson then left the chamber.

Mental Health

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (14:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on how the Morrison government is acting in a stable and certain way to address the real issue of providing greater support for mental health and suicide prevention?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:05): I thank the member for her question. One life lost to suicide is one too many, which is why my government is working towards a zero suicide goal. As Prime Minister, I have made it a national priority for mental health and suicide prevention to be a focus of our government. The statistics speak for themselves. One in five Australians experience a common mental disorder each year. One in four Australians aged 16 to 24 experience mental illness in any given year. Most sadly of all, 3,046 Australians in 2018 took their own lives, a tragedy that touches far too many families.

The government is making record investments when it comes to mental health in this country: now over $5.3 billion in 2019-20, up from $4.9 billion in 2018-19. In the most recent budget that the Treasurer handed down there was $503 million specifically for measures to deal with youth mental health and suicide prevention. I have appointed Ms Christine Morgan as our national suicide prevention officer. She is consulting with Australians across the country and she is bringing people together from all perspectives in this country to deal with this very serious issue. Some 26 town hall meetings have been held already. On 13 November
she brought together over 100 leaders in this area at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to have the Towards Zero Suicide Prevention Forum to design new ways to address the complex issues contributing to Australia's suicide rate and involve community members and organisations in this conversation. The forum will determine further priorities and outcomes that the government will seek to work to as we go to next year's budget and beyond.

We are working with the states and territories. My government is working to confront the mental health challenges faced also by our veterans, our police, our security agencies and our first responders, for whom we have a direct responsibly. I also want to acknowledge here in this place the leadership of the Victorian Premier, Dan Andrews, who today released the interim report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. Governments across Australia must work together showing leadership to address the real issues that matter to Australians, and this is certainly one. I look forward to working very closely with Premier Andrews, as we have already had a number of very good and worthy discussions to advance measures together.

This is an issue that I know all Australians feel deeply about. These are the issues we must be focusing on in this place. For those Australians needing support, there is immediate help available to them through Lifeline, Beyond Blue, Kids Helpline and many other organisations. We thank them for the great work that they do in all of those organisations. I particularly want to thank Christine Morgan, who was recognised by the University of New South Wales this year in their annual prize for those addressing mental health. She has done an amazing job for young people, particularly those dealing with eating disorders in this country. She is a great leader on this issue. I'm looking forward to working with her more in the years ahead.

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): on indulgence—I associate Labor with the comments of the Prime Minister. On an average day, six Australians will kill themselves; tomorrow, another six; and, the next day, another six. That's six a day too many. I know that my shadow minister for health is working with the government Minister for Health to ensure that the response is as bipartisan and, indeed, as effective as the response to HIV-AIDS was under the Hawke and Howard government and opposition respectively.

**Prime Minister**

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is again addressed to the Prime Minister. Former anticorruption commissioner and Supreme Court Judge David Ipp AO QC has said in relation to the Prime Minister's phone call to the New South Wales police commissioner:

You can't see that it's information that relates to matters of state interest. It can only relate to matters of party interest.

How on earth was that phone call appropriate?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:10): Once again I reject the premise of the question which is raised by the Leader of the Opposition and I refer the member to the response by Commissioner Fuller yesterday, who said very plainly:

The Prime Minister didn't ask me any questions that were inappropriate. He didn't ask for anything that was inappropriate and I'm comfortable with the discussion we had over a few minutes.
They are the words of the police commissioner. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to cast aspersions against the New South Wales police commissioner he can do so. But I simply say this: the Leader of the Opposition raised a very serious issue with me at the beginning of this week, on Tuesday. I undertook to fulfil my obligations, which he invited me to do, under the statement of ministerial standards, where I had to assess whether a minister should stand aside in the circumstances he presented. I sought to inform myself, as is entirely appropriate, of the nature, substance and instigation of that investigation. I was up-front with the parliament about doing it. I then went and undertook that action and then I reported back to this House on that action—

Dr Aly interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Could the Prime Minister just pause for a second. The member for Cowan will leave under 94(a).

The member for Cowan then left the chamber.

Ms Catherine King interjecting—

The SPEAKER: And the member for Ballarat is about to follow her! The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr MORRISON: I undertook that action, as I flagged in this House. I went outside this place, I undertook that action, and I came and reported back to this action in the parliament and the decision I have taken. What I find strange is that at no time during that period on Tuesday did the Leader of the Opposition—during the course of that evening in the many interviews that he gave or, indeed, even after I had come back into this place and explained that I had had that conversation with the police commissioner—raise any objection. He raised no objection all night. There he was. He didn't do it until the next day, I am advised. He didn't do it until the next day, until he read it in The Guardian. We know who's pulling his chain!

Regional Australia

Mr CONAGHAN (Cowper) (14:12): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how the Morrison-McCormack government is providing stability and certainty by addressing the real issue of delivering for regional Australia, including those communities affected by the drought?

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:13): I thank the member for Cowper for standing shoulder to shoulder with the victims of the fires in his area. He and I were at Willawarrin the other day with Ian Sheridan. Ian had been out fighting the fires with the Willawarrin Bushfire Brigade whilst his own house, not far away, was burning to the ground. Every possession in that house was lost, his car was destroyed, and potentially his hopes for the future were destroyed in that blaze. But he was still positive, he was still looking to the future and he was still thinking about others in his area. Pat and I stood there with him and he was absolutely committed to helping other people.

Australia should pay tribute to those people. I appreciate that four people have lost their lives in these dreadful fires. That's why on Sunday the federal government again helped with a $48.25 million package. It won't be enough. We will be there helping them. It certainly is going to help them in the here and now, but in the future we will again look at what we can do
to help these communities through what is potentially going to be an awful summer. When we think of the drought, we think of the $709 million package that we put on the table. Again, we will continue to monitor the situation and continue to address the drought as we have the whole way through, to make sure we stand shoulder to shoulder with not just farmers but also those regional small businesses which really need assistance. That's why that package that we announced recently contained measures so that, through the Regional Investment Corporation, small businesses can borrow money interest free for two years—like the farmers. There were 128 councils and, under the drought communities support program, we're helping them with another million dollars—122 of them have already received a million dollars through that program. Of course, the Building Better Regions Fund, which is open now and closes on 19 December, is a drought round that is specific for not just the 128 local government areas but other council areas which are affected by drought. We welcome those submissions. We know from past experience when we had that $200 million fund that it's always oversubscribed. There's always over a billion dollars worth of applications and submissions. We're there to help those drought communities this time, and certainly every time.

I know how important this is for the member for Cowper. I know how important this is for everybody who represents rural and regional Australia, and that includes people on both sides of the parliament. We will be there. We can see beyond the chamber doors. I've been really disappointed with the antics this week. I've been really disappointed with the way that Labor has acted when we could have been at a bipartisan level, but, no. We see that our regions are hurting and we're responding on their behalf. (Time expired)

Prime Minister

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): My question is again to the Prime Minister. Former counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption Geoffrey Watson SC said the Prime Minister's phone call to the New South Wales police commissioner 'should never have happened'. He stated, 'It just looks like he's applying pressure,' and, 'It can't be anything else—it must be a favour because why else would he be calling?' I again ask: how on earth was that phone call appropriate?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:16): I refer the Leader of the Opposition to my earlier answers. The Leader of the Opposition invited me earlier this week to inform myself of the matters that he'd raised in the parliament and in relation to the Statement of Ministerial Standards. In this very chamber—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: I told him exactly what I was going to do to inform myself, both to comply with my duties to this House and to comply with my duties as Prime Minister under the ministerial statement of standards. I did what I said I was going to do. I was up-front about it with the Australian people. I was up-front about it with the parliament. I went and told them what I'd done. I made a decision. What we have seen since that time is the political games being played by a Leader of the Opposition who is more interested in the drama and the carryings on of Canberra politics than he is in the serious issues that are being raised in this place. I know that, because he was on the top of the list when it came to shutting down and gagging a veteran in this chamber who had said they wished to speak on the issue of veteran suicide.
Opposition members interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: The Leader of the Opposition can use all the fine words he likes, but in this chamber, on his direction, one of his members moved that the member for Herbert no longer be heard, and he wished to speak about veteran suicide. Shame on you!

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Has the Prime Minister concluded his answer? He has. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The member for Ballarat can be warned only so many times. She'll leave the chamber under standing order 94(a).

The member for Ballarat then left the chamber.

Mayo Electorate: Hospitals

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (14:18): My question is to the Minister for Health. Prior to the election, the government announced $8.4 million to expand the South Coast District Hospital at Victor Harbor and $8.6 million to upgrade the Mount Barker District Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. We desperately need to expand our hospitals. These funds won't be released, however, until 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively. In light of the government's commitment to fast-track infrastructure, will the minister agree to release the funds in this parliamentary term? If not, why not?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:19): I thank the member for Mayo for her question. The government is committed to both projects—$8.4 million and $8.6 million, respectively, as the member raised. In particular the Mount Barker project, which I attended with South Australian minister Stephen Wade, is being determined on the basis of the time frames for current activities that are being undertaken which would then allow our work to commence. Both of these projects were determined in discussion with the South Australian government. If they seek at any stage to bring those forward, that's a matter that we would consider. I have visited Mount Barker and I have seen the work that is being proposed elsewhere. What we are doing is providing resources onsite in South Australia for state based projects through federal funding. That federal funding will allow, in Mount Barker and across the electorate of Mayo, activities to occur that previously would never have been able to occur. In particular the emergency department in Mount Barker will have better capacity, will be better for staff and will be better for patients.

Both projects are on track and on time, as announced. The first of those will commence in just over six months, in terms of the ability for federal funds to arrive. Prior to that, of course, there has to be planning. That planning is being undertaken by the state government. I state for the member very clearly: in just over six months the first payments are scheduled to arrive—in 2020-21. That is ready. We're in a position to do that because we have a strong budget. I am not aware that either the hospital or the South Australian government are in a position to commence construction prior to that period of just over six months. If the member is aware that the plans have been completed, that construction is ready and that contractors have been engaged, I would be happy to receive that information.

Economy

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (14:21): Could the Treasurer explain to the House the importance of delivering stable and certain economic management to address the real issue of
uncertainties in the global economy? Would the Treasurer also remind the House of why it's not the time for panicking or talking down the Australian economy?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:22): I thank the member for Menzies for his question. I know that, in his electorate—the constituents that he's fighting hard for—there are around 20,000 small businesses that will be able to access the instant asset write-off and more than 60,000 taxpayers who will get a tax cut as a result of legislation we on this side of the House supported.

The Australian economy faces some significant global economic headwinds. In the last six months the IMF, the OECD and the World Bank have all downgraded their global growth forecasts. In fact, global consumer confidence is now at its lowest level in four years and global business confidence is at its lowest level since 2012. The IMF have said that, if the trade tensions between China and the United States don't abate, global growth will be down by around $700 billion by next year. So it's more important than ever that we stay the course and stick to our plan, continue to invest in infrastructure and tax cuts, and provide the opportunity to create more jobs with things like our 10-year $100 billion infrastructure pipeline, with $3.8 billion being brought forward; like our more than $300 billion of tax cuts, which will abolish a whole tax bracket—the 37c-in-the-dollar tax bracket—and like our announcement yesterday of a $540 million business growth fund that will back small businesses around the country.

It's this calm and disciplined approach to the economy that has seen today mining investment have its biggest jump since 2012 and that saw Standard & Poor's say just yesterday that the outlook for the Australian economy is sound. Our steady, methodical, considered approach to the economy is in stark contrast to the panicked approach of those opposite, with their focus on higher taxes and reckless spending. The Labor Party aren't interested in the real issues about the economy, because they've got a shadow Treasurer who's in witness protection! He has averaged about one question a week. Even the member for McMahon doubted that average. He had two questions a week.

A government member: Free Jim!

Mr FRYDENBERG: Free Jim! The shadow Treasurer is averaging about one question a week. The Labor Party aren't interested in questions about infrastructure, they're not interested in questions about tax, they're not interested in questions about jobs, because the Labor Party can only be relied on for one thing: $387 billion of higher taxes. (Time expired)

Prime Minister

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:25): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. How can the Prime Minister claim that the opposition made no objection to his statement that he would call the New South Wales police commissioner about the substance of Strike Force Garrad into one of his cabinet ministers, when the Prime Minister has prevented the parliament debating this deepening scandal 20 times this week?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:26): I am sorry to have offended the precious sensitivities of the Leader of the Opposition! But, on the issue of gag motions that he has raised in his question, the one thing the Leader of the Opposition should apologise for is running the sort of political game tactics we've seen on display this week, and in its worst form today, where the Leader of the Opposition voted to
gag a veteran of this country who was seeking to speak about veteran suicide in this country. He was on the top of the list of those who voted to gag that member. But it wasn't only that; the bill he was speaking on was the Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill, which expands eligibility for the Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme to current and former members of the Australian Defence Force, and, on the second reading, they voted against this bill. The only person who should be apologising in this chamber is the Leader of the Labor Party, for his grubby political games.

Mr Butler: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Has the Prime Minister concluded his answer? The Prime Minister has concluded his answer.

Mental Health

Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's stable and certain economic management is ensuring significant investment in medical research and helping address the real and fundamentally important issue of mental health and suicide prevention?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:27): I want to thank the member for Sturt, who, along with many members, has come to this place with a passionate commitment to work to protect against suicide, to work for mental health. In particular, he has focused on the work of the Jamie Larcombe Centre, honouring a veteran who lost his life serving Australia—a centre that focuses on mental health for our veterans. But he's one of many people in this place who deal with the challenge that confronts the nation. We know that over 3,000 Australians lost their lives to suicide in the last year. That was a reduction of over 80 lives, but nevertheless 3,000 is still a catastrophic national tragedy. There are members on all sides who have been deeply involved. I acknowledge the member for Eden-Monaro, a veteran, who's not here today. I acknowledge the member for Berowra. I also acknowledge the member for Solomon and, of course, I acknowledge Phil Thompson, the member for Herbert, for his contribution, even today—powerful, moving words which we all value.

Against that background, we have set a clear target of working towards zero suicides in Australia. We've backed that with a $736 million package. In particular, that has focused on youth mental health and suicide prevention, an expansion in the number of headspace centres, an expansion in the support for existing headspace centres, early youth psychosis and Indigenous Australian support.

Importantly, though, we are also contributing to research. The establishment of the $125 million Million Minds Mental Health Research Mission is a milestone. Under the Medical Research Future Fund, this has already seen allocations of $27.5 million to a number of programs. Approximately $5 million has gone to the University of Western Australia for work, led by the great Professor Pat Dudgeon, on improving Indigenous mental health and to reduce Indigenous suicide—a scourge which it is just profoundly important to stop. Monash University has been given almost $5 million to reduce children's and youth suicide. And the University of Sydney has been given $3.6 million for work on eating disorders—a catastrophic condition that can take lives, can carve them up—to make real progress in a way the nation has never done before.
Against that background, I'm delighted to announce today that we are opening a further $8 million round for suicide prevention through the Million Minds Mental Health Research Mission. That funding, which we are able to afford and invest because of the state of the nation's economic health, means that we will search for and invite programs which are innovative, which are creative and which will save lives in the community and across the nation. *(Time expired)*

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

The SPEAKER (14:30): I'd like to inform the House we have present in the gallery this afternoon the Australian Political Exchange Council's 13th delegation from New Zealand. On behalf of the House, a very warm welcome to you all.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

Prime Minister

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh) (14:31): My question is to the Prime Minister. Did the Prime Minister or his office brief Phil Coorey of the *Financial Review* that 'Morrison reported back to the House that he was not standing Taylor aside, basically because Fuller told him the investigation was not much more than a phone call to Moore's office'?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:31): I refer the member to my response that I tabled in this House as to the nature of my call with the commissioner of police, and I refer them also to the statements made by the commissioner about the contents of that call.

That is the 64th time, I think, that those opposite have asked questions about this matter. That is four times the number of questions they have asked on drought and drought policy in this chamber since the election. It's more questions than they have asked on the economy. It's more than they've asked on child care. They've asked two questions on national security, three on education and six on health, but 64 on this matter.

Do you know what it says about the Leader of the Opposition? He's more interested in the political games of Canberra than he is in the real issues that the people of Australia voted for us to focus on, and we're totally focused on those. I'm not distracted by the desperate political games of the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition would rather be the Manager of Opposition Business than the Prime Minister, because he'd rather engage himself in all the silly little games and tantrums and sooking and sulking that we have seen from this Leader of the Opposition. But all of that comes to naught when you compare it with the depth of the tactics he stooped to today by silencing a veteran of this country.

The SPEAKER: Is the Leader of the Opposition seeking to table a document?

Mr Albanese: Yes, Mr Speaker. I seek leave to table the *Hansard* that shows that the member for Herbert was talking about NAIF—Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility—and attacking the Palaszczuk government, not talking about—

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

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Scullin.
Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left! The member for Macnamara and the member for Burt. I'm going to ask the Leader of the Opposition to resume his seat for a second. I get to have a say every now and again. I understand the point the Leader of the Opposition's trying to make, but I'm not going to allow Hansard to be tabled. There is nothing more accessible than Hansard, as the Leader of the Opposition has shown. The Leader of the House is seeking the call?

Mr Porter: On this occasion we'd probably be willing to provide leave to table Hansard, given that what the member said was 'and then I'll talk on this bill as well as suicide prevention'. So table away.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition can resume his seat. Sorry, I don't think anyone was listening. I'm not having Hansard tabled; you've all got it. Okay? Do you want me to table the blue again? You've all got it. So you can play your game, but I'm not.

Workplace Relations

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (14:35): My question is to the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the Attorney outline to the House how the Morrison government is addressing the very real issue of militant unionism on Australian worksites? Is he aware of alternative approaches?

Mr Hill interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Bruce will leave under standing order 94(a).

The member for Bruce then left the chamber.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (14:35): Members opposite are in denial about the existence of militant unionism. They just deny its very existence. Right now in the Senate, being debated, is the ensuring union integrity bill, one of most important bills before the parliament. What it seeks to do is stop militant union officials actively, deliberately and repetitively breaking the law, and no-one should doubt the deliberate nature of the law-breaking. The head of the union movement in Australia, Sally McManus, said:

… I don't think there's a problem with breaking it—

the law. 'I don't think there is a problem with breaking the law.' John Setka, head of the CFMEU in Victoria, said: 'If you play by the laws you will never win. That's why we fight outside the law.' And last night that policy position crossed over into Labor policy when Labor senator Glenn Sterle stated Labor's position as being that union officials have to break the law.

If Labor's position now is that union officials have to break the law, if that's the job description of union officials, then this House can be well informed, based on years of bitter, real-world experience. In the real world every day what is it that militant union officials have to do? What laws are they that Labor say militant union officials have to break? Do militant union officials have to assault police? Do they have to resist arrest? Do they have to commit theft? Do they really have to possess and deal drugs? Are these the laws that they have to break? Do they have to regularly be in contempt of court? Do they have to coerce workers? Do they have to obstruct legitimate work on construction sites? Do they have to commit
trespass? Are these the laws that, by Labor policy, union officials have to break? This is a valid question I think: do union officials at the CFMEU have to put up on Facebook what they call 'scab sheets', which identify Public Service investigators, including putting up their personal details so that female staff members are rung at home, at night, and abused? Is that what union officials have to do?

Mr Speaker, do union officials have to stop people from going to work in their crane company, where they work hard every day, by spitting on them, by calling them scabs and dogs, and then later by uploading pictures and footage they have taken of those hardworking men and women onto the CFMEU Facebook page, where, after having been personally abused and spat on, they are subject to further online abuse and intimidation? Is that now, by Labor policy stated by Glenn Sterle, what union officials have to do? (Time expired)

Prime Minister

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh) (14:38): My question is to minister for emissions reduction. Has the minister or his office had any communication from the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's office about the content of the phone call between the Prime Minister and the New South Wales police commissioner on Tuesday?

Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction) (14:38):

I've said to the Prime Minister what I have said to the House, and I'll remind those opposite—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr TAYLOR: I'll remind those opposite that I made a statement in the House—

The SPEAKER: The minister will just pause for a second. Members on my left, I need to be able to hear the answer.

Mr TAYLOR: I stand by the statement that I tabled in the House earlier this week, and I've got nothing to add to it. As I have said repeatedly to the House, I reject absolutely the suggestion that I or any members of my staff altered the documents in question.

The SPEAKER: The minister will just pause for a second. The member for Hindmarsh on a point of order.

Mr Butler: Direct relevance. I asked—

The SPEAKER: The member for Hindmarsh will resume his seat. I know exactly what you asked; I've got a summary of it in front of me. The minister is being directly relevant to the question. The minister does not have to answer the question in the way you want. It's well established. As I've said, the standing orders require him to be directly relevant and you have taken your one point of order on relevance. The minister has the call.

Mr TAYLOR: This is a pathetic, outrageous accusation by those opposite. We know exactly what this is about. It's about distracting us from our strong focus on delivering a fair deal on energy for all Australians. I'm pleased to report, according to the ABS, we've had the first ever—

The SPEAKER: The minister is now straying beyond the question. The minister needs to be directly relevant to the question. The question did not ask about any ABS figures or anything of the like. The minister needs to be directly relevant or resume his seat.
Mr TAYLOR: Those opposite are all smear and no idea.

National Security

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (14:41): My question is to the Minister for Home Affairs. Will the minister outline to the House the Morrison government's stable and certain approach to addressing the very real issue of national security, including protecting Australians from the evolving threats of terrorism and foreign interference? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Home Affairs) (14:41): I thank the honourable member for his question. The Morrison government is absolutely committed to making sure that we can protect our community to keep our borders safe and to keep Australians as safe as possible. We do face a very significant threat from terrorism. We've been very clear about that over a long period of time. Indeed, many Western democracies face the same threat as we do. In Australia, our threat level is at 'probable', which means that there is intelligence that indicates that individuals or groups continue to possess the intent and capability to conduct a terrorist attack. We know that, since 12 September 2014, when the terrorism threat level was raised to probable, there have been seven attacks, targeting people in our country and 16 major counterterrorism disruptions.

I want to pay tribute to the police, our intelligence agencies and our international partners—in particular our Five Eyes partners, because we work with them in a fashion absolutely designed to keeping Australians safe. As I speak, there are 53 Australians or people who are serving sentences in prisons for terrorism related offences and we're worried about the imminent release of some of those people, so this threat will continue for many, many years to come. We have an excellent director-general who has just been appointed. He leads a very significant team, and they do work behind the scenes that Australians just don't see. The work of ASIO, the work of ASIS, the Australian Federal Police and our other agencies, really is world leading, and I pay tribute to all of them again today. We've provided support, though, to our agencies; we've given record amounts of funding. We have introduced now 18 tranches of counterterrorism legislation since 2014 to make sure we can deal with the very real threat of terrorism, as well as the very real threat of foreign interference in our country. We are working with our international partners to make sure that we can deal with that threat into the future, because it is very real on our shores.

There's a lot of talk and discussion coming from those opposite. Regrettably, they have not asked one question on this matter. I have not had a question. I don't even know now who the shadow minister opposite is. It used to be the member for Blair. He's been banished and sent down the other end. They don't ask questions on serious issues like national security or border protection because they're off running these silly, childish political games. This Leader of the Opposition has a bigger glass jaw than even his predecessor. This whole game playing this week has all been about his own ego, and no wonder the Australian people are shaking their heads at him and those people who sit behind him.

Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh) (14:45): My question again is to the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. On 24 October the minister told the House: The document was drawn directly from the City of Sydney's website. It was publicly available.
He repeated that claim in a written statement tabled in the parliament on Monday and stood by it in his previous answer today. Does the minister stand by his statement on 24 October?

_Opposition members interjecting_—

_The SPEAKER_: Members on my left!

_Opposition members interjecting_—

_The SPEAKER_: I'll just tell members on my left that all they're doing is delaying proceedings. It's their question time. They've asked the question. Presumably they want me to rule on the impending point of order. The Leader of the House.

_Mr Porter_: It was, indeed, the shadow Attorney-General who requested that there be a police inquiry into this matter. That question goes directly and clearly to the matters that will be the subject of that inquiry. I seek your guidance as to whether or not that question is actually placing this House at real risk of prejudicing what it was that members opposite called for in the first place.

_The SPEAKER_: The Deputy Manager of Opposition Business on the point of order.

_Mr Butler_: The question goes directly to whether or not the minister has deliberately misled this House, not to the conduct of the strike force that's been launched into whether or not the minister also engaged in criminal conduct.

_Mr Albanese_: We tried, but you shut it down.

_The SPEAKER_: The Leader of the Opposition. Does the Leader of the House have an additional point?

_Mr Porter_: I do. If the subject of the question was as the member just described, that would have to occur by way of a substantive motion.

_Mr Bowen_: Which you'd then gag!

_The SPEAKER_: The member for McMahon might gag himself and do everyone a favour. If I heard the Leader of the House correctly, he was saying that, because the word 'mislead' has been used, it has to be by substantive motion. There's a long history on this which I won't detain the House with, but 'mislead' and 'deliberately mislead' are two completely different things. He didn't say 'deliberately mislead'—

_Mr Porter_: The second time he did.

_The SPEAKER_: Not in the question. It certainly wasn't in the question.

_Honourable members interjecting_—

_The SPEAKER_: Members up the back, you're really not helping your own colleagues, let alone the chamber.

_Mr Husic interjecting_—

_The SPEAKER_: The member for Chifley, just end your conversation with yourself. The Leader of the House is essentially raising a legitimate concern about potential sub judice. Without pulling out the page of the _Practice_, I had cause very early on in my speakership to deal with this issue almost on a daily basis. Given where proceedings are at, if I can put it that way, I don't want to use too many words you'd find in the _Practice_ that that question wouldn't offend that rule—simply asking a minister whether they stand by a statement they've made in the House. So I'll call the minister.

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**CHAMBER**
Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction) (14:48): Yes, I do stand by that statement, and I remind those opposite that I said in that statement:

I reject absolutely the suggestion that I or any members of my staff altered the documents in question. But the Labor Party has, in typical fashion, dramatically overreached by claiming these documents were forged or altered. The Labor Party has a track record of using police referrals as a political tool. We know what this is about. It's about distracting us from getting on with the job, with three consecutive quarters of price reductions for the first time since records have existed.

Health Care

Dr MARTIN (Reid) (14:49): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Women. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's stable and certain economic management is helping address the real issue of women's health, including those women suffering from ovarian cancer?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (14:49): I thank the member for Reid for her question and for her genuine interest in this important women's issue.

Ovarian cancer is a cruel and devastating diagnosis for women, for their families and for their communities. It's estimated to be the 10th-most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australian women, and 1,500 women will die of it this year. The survival rate for ovarian cancer is only 45 per cent—relatively low, in part due to the fact that it just doesn't have an early detection test.

The Morrison government is investing $20 million for research grants into ovarian cancer. We gratefully received that information from the health minister this morning. This funding will be provided through the Medical Research Future Fund's Emerging Priorities and Consumer Driven Research Initiative. The grant opportunity is now open for high-quality research which will contribute to a greater understanding of the causes and the underlying factors in the development and progression of ovarian cancer.

I caught up with Professor David Bowtell, who hails from my electorate of Farrer in the upper Murray region. He is, lately, the principal investigator in the Australian Ovarian Cancer Study. He talked to me about the priorities of these grants being not just about early detection but about a cure. Professor Bowtell is already conducting landmark research in a bid to find out how cancer cells are combating the treatments that we have now, because we know that chemotherapy, radiation therapy and immunotherapy work for a while and then stop working. That's the code that we have to crack.

One of the important aspects of the grants that are coming out in this particular round is psychosocial support. The member for Reid, with her background in family counselling, knows only too well that there is the diagnosis, but then there is the going home. There is managing the trips to treatment and managing what is an incredibly life-changing event. So it is important that the health system also recognises the effect that this has on families, and reaches out with that very valuable support. I'm delighted that that support is reaching 400 rural women.

Women, who spend so much of their lives holding their families close, can know that through the brilliant minds of the researchers in this country, our $20 billion investment in the
Medical Research Future Fund, the new clinical trials and, now, this new round of grants for ovarian cancer research, we will continue to hold them close.

**Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:52): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Strike Force Garrad investigation, and to a report that just before 2 pm it took copies of correspondence and the metadata showing details of any alterations from the City of Sydney website relating to travel and the suggestions from the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. Has the government also provided all relevant emails, documents, text messages, phone records, data, metadata and encrypted messages to the New South Wales police, and will it respond positively to— (Time expired)

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:53): As I assured the House earlier this week, the government of course will cooperate fully with the New South Wales police investigation. As I said, we will await the outcomes of that investigation and, at that time, if there are any further matters for me to consider then of course I will. The matter that I was invited to address earlier this week by the Leader of the Opposition was the application of the ministerial standards. I addressed myself to those issues in the way that I outlined to the House. That's where the matter stands now.

But I note that in the matters the Leader of the Opposition has raised with me, he has established this principle, which says that a minister—a senior member of my team—who is the subject of an investigation should immediately have to stand aside. I note that that was not a standard the Labor Party pursued when they were in government. I note that it is not a standard they have sought to apply in opposition, when members of their own front bench have been the subject of police investigation for very serious issues in the past—that has not been the cause for those members to stand aside.

I heard today that in direct response to questioning—

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

Mr Butler: On direct relevance. This was a very tight question about the provision of information to the New South Wales police. The Prime Minister was straying right off the question.

The SPEAKER: I think the Prime Minister has been entitled to give some context to what was a long, but pretty specific question. I think the Prime Minister has done that, and in his remaining time, obviously, he can address the matters that were raised in the question. If he feels he needs to—I think, in fairness, he did right at the start.

Mr MORRISON: I addressed those right at the very start of my answer. What is clear now is the Leader of the Opposition today was not prepared to apply the same standard that he seeks of the government to his own frontbenchers. He refused to apply this standard to his own frontbenchers. That's called a hypocrite.

**Australian Bushfires**

Mr HOGAN (Page—Deputy Speaker) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management. Will the
minister outline to the House the Morrison-McCormack government's stable approach to addressing the real issue of supporting those communities tragically affected by bushfires?

**Mr LITTLEPROUD** (Maranoa—Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management) (14:55): Can I thank the member for Page for his question and his leadership during these recent fires that were quite severe in his own electorate—and the leadership of all federal members of both sides. Every state has been impacted by these recent fires, and there has been leadership from all members in coming together, with our state agencies, and making sure that we collectively work together. As those fires abate, we're now working into the recovery phase. The federal government initiated, from the very start, while even some of those fires were still going, our Disaster Recovery Payments. They are $1,000 per adult and $400 per child. They're about providing the essentials to these people that have been impacted by these fires to get them through the here and now. Obviously, we'll continue to make further investments in the recovery. That now continues as agencies are able to safely get in and make those assessments.

On Sunday, the New South Wales premier and I made a further announcement of an additional $48.25 million for those affected by the fires in New South Wales, and that provides $15,000 grants to small businesses and to farmers to help them. Also, a very important component of that is the $4 million towards mental health packages. This is about not only the physical recovery but the emotional recovery that we now have to work through. We're also allowing up to 13 weeks worth of income support to those people whose income has been impacted by these fires, and the ATO is making provisions to allow those people that have to provide BAS and tax returns some concessions around the timeliness of providing them. We'll continue to work with other states as they make assessments and provide them to us and make sure that it's done in a timely fashion.

I think it's also important that I take the opportunity to update the House. There's been considerable commentary about our preparedness, and I can say with great authority that Australians should have great comfort in the professionalism of our fire commissioners around the country. We have a nationally coordinated approach, particularly around aerial assets. AFAC, who are the peak body that all fire chiefs from around the report to, only in the last two weeks advised me, after I wrote to them, that at the moment we have suitable aerial assets in this country to face the fire threat that this country has at the moment. It will continue to be monitored, and we will continue to act with the states and AFAC on their advice—not on politicians' or anyone else's advice but AFAC's advice. As they provide that advice, we will act and act swiftly to make sure that there are suitable assets to keep Australians safe during this prolonged fire season. But we can be comforted that their advice many months ago was that we are prepared, and we continue to be so. We thank them for their professionalism. Australians should take comfort that all governments will stand with them to keep them safe this fire season.

**MOTIONS**

**Prime Minister**

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:58): I seek leave to move the following motion:

That the House:
(1) notes that this week:
   (a) detectives from the NSW Police Force's State Crime Command Financial Crimes Squad launched Strike Force Garrad to investigate whether the Minister for Emissions Reduction committed a crime;
   (b) the Prime Minister refused to stand down the Minister while the subject of a criminal investigation notwithstanding the Ministerial Standards;
   (c) the Prime Minister called the NSW Police Commissioner and discussed the nature, substance and instigation of the criminal investigation;
   (d) former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, former NSW ICAC Commissioner David Ipp QC, and former NSW ICAC Counsel Assisting Geoffrey Watson SC have criticised the Prime Minister's call;
   (e) the Prime Minister misled the House while defending the deliberate misleading of the House by the Minister and refused to apologise and correct the record; and—

Mr McCormack interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE: It's a substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: It's a substantive motion.

Mr ALBANESE: To continue:
   (f) the Prime Minister failed to answer questions about his conduct, or the conduct of the Minister, and prevented Parliament debating this scandal 20 times; and

(2) therefore, calls on the Prime Minister to:
   (a) acknowledge the Minister for Emissions Reduction deliberately misled the House;
   (b) acknowledge the Prime Minister's decision to call the NSW Police Commissioner was inappropriate;
   (c) correct the record in person and apologise for misleading the House on Wednesday;
   (d) correct the record in person and apologise for misleading the House today by claiming the Opposition voted against the second reading of the Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill 2019 when it supported it;
   (e) undertake to fully cooperate with the NSW Police Force criminal investigation; and
   (f) stand down the Minister for Emissions Reduction.

The SPEAKER: Is leave granted?
Leave is not granted.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:01): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the member for Grayndler from moving the following motion immediately:

That the House:
(1) notes that this week:
   (a) detectives from the NSW Police Force's State Crime Command Financial Crimes Squad launched Strike Force Garrad to investigate whether the Minister for Emissions Reduction committed a crime;
   (b) the Prime Minister refused to stand down the Minister while the subject of a criminal investigation notwithstanding the Ministerial Standards;
   (c) the Prime Minister called the NSW Police Commissioner and discussed the nature, substance and instigation of the criminal investigation;
   (d) former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, former NSW ICAC Commissioner David Ipp QC, and former NSW ICAC Counsel Assisting Geoffrey Watson SC have criticised the Prime Minister's call;
(e) the Prime Minister misled the House while defending the deliberate misleading of the House by the Minister and refused to apologise and correct the record; and

(f) the Prime Minister failed to answer questions about his conduct, or the conduct of the Minister, and prevented Parliament debating this scandal 20 times; and

(2) therefore, calls on the Prime Minister to:

(a) acknowledge the Minister for Emissions Reduction deliberately misled the House;

(b) acknowledge the Prime Minister's decision to call the NSW Police Commissioner was inappropriate;

(c) correct the record in person and apologise for misleading the House on Wednesday;

(d) correct the record in person and apologise for misleading the House today by claiming the Opposition voted against the second reading of the Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill 2019 when it supported it;

(e) undertake to fully cooperate with the NSW Police Force criminal investigation; and

(f) stand down the Minister for Emissions Reduction.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:03): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the Leader of the Opposition be no further heard.

The House divided. [15:08]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 73
Noes ...................... 64
Majority ............... 9

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:09): Is the motion seconded?
Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh) (15:09): Seconded. The traditions and the procedures of this place mean nothing under this Prime Minister—

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:09): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the member for Hindmarsh be no further heard.

The House divided. [15:11]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 73
Noes ...................... 64
Majority ................ 9

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

ALES
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:12): The question now is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:12): Weak! Cowardly! Lacking in courage to have any debate in this place. That's what characterises—

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:12): I move:

That the question be now put.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be put.

The House divided. [15:14]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 73
Noes ...................... 64
Majority ................ 9
AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, Ml
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Husic, EN

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:16): The question is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

The House divided. [15:16]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................65
Noes ......................73
Majority ..............8

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O'connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

AYES

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Khalil, P
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
O'neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A
AYES

O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DBP
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MJ
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T
Question negatived.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE
Veterans: Mental Health

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (15:21): My question is for the Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government is addressing the very serious and real issue of veteran suicide?

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel and Deputy Leader of the House) (15:21): I thank the member for Herbert for his question. I acknowledge him, along with many others in this place who have served in uniform, and I thank them all for their service and congratulate them on their decision to join the parliament. I also acknowledge the member for Herbert’s comments earlier today in this place, just before question time, where he told us that, just this week, he’d lost a mate to suicide—a veteran in his community. I know he’s already made contact with the young family involved, and I wonder if he could pass on the condolences of the House to his mate’s family.

I acknowledge that this is a complex and difficult issue for all of us, a difficult issue to resolve. It is a real issue of concern to the entire parliament. The only acceptable number for me as a minister is zero. The only acceptable number to the veteran community is zero. So I thank all members, from the Prime Minister down—for his personal interest in this topic—to the ministers on this side, the backbench, the crossbench and those opposite, for their willingness to work in a very bipartisan way when it comes to issues of suicide prevention. There must not be political allegiances when it comes to this topic. There just has to be a shared humanity, a shared determination to improve mental health and eliminate suicide in our community, particularly for those of us who work amongst the Defence community and amongst our veterans.

I want to assure our veteran community and those listening today that help is available for you. The Open Arms service is available on 1800011046. The free counselling service is available for you to reach out and seek help. I also want to assure those listening at home, members opposite and those on this side of the House that changes are being made. We have been successful over recent years with bipartisan support to implement a whole range of new mental health measures. In fact, we provide more than $230 million per year now to support our veterans and their families when it comes to good mental health. There is free lifetime mental health care for anyone with one day of service. That includes reservists as well. There is needs based transition support at that difficult time when members leave the Defence Force—needs based transition and employment support for vulnerable groups when they leave the ADF. There are immediate payments for those submitting mental health claims to the DVA. We’ve expanded Open Arms to provide more support across the nation. We’re piloting new approaches to suicide prevention, including things like the provision of psychiatric assistance dogs to those veterans with a PTSD diagnosis. There is a national network of Veterans' Wellbeing Centres being established right now—six new wellbeing centres being established by the DVA across our country. So work is being done. Changes are being made.
Finally I say to those who have lost loved ones to suicide: please take some comfort that this parliament is united when it comes to improving mental wellbeing and preventing suicide. None of us can pretend to fully understand your grief at the loss of a loved one in these extraordinarily difficult times—the anger, the frustration, the grief you must feel—but we can commit ourselves in this place to working together to prevent suicide across our nation, and particularly in our veteran community. We can do better. I believe we must do better and I also believe we will do better. I thank the House.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:24): on indulgence—I associate Labor with the remarks of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, and I thank him for the ongoing, cooperative consultation that he has had with myself, with the shadow minister for veterans' affairs and the shadow minister for defence on these issues. It was my great honour yesterday, with the three of us, to meet Julie-Ann Finney, who lost her son, David, to suicide. Ms Finney has a very passionate perspective that she brings to this debate. I indicated to her that I'd continue to discuss with the government the issues that she raises in the context of how we can truly make sure that those who have put their lives on the line to defend our nation, to defend our way of life and, indeed, to defend all of us can be given the respect and care that they deserve whilst they're in service but also after they leave the service.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:25): on indulgence—I also am meeting with Ms Finney this afternoon. I have met her on other occasions, as well as other parents. These are difficult conversations. They have suffered a loss that we just can't imagine. I know all members of the House would extend our deepest sympathies to them for their terrible loss, which is with them every single day. I want to convey to the member for Herbert and all of his mates that this entire place stands with you and all of their families. On that note, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Prime Minister

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:26): I'm always happy to correct the record when it is needed and do so as properly as I can. In relation to the Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill, the opposition voted against the moving of the third reading which, of course, would have frustrated the bill.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members on my left. The member for Shortland.

Mr Stephen Jones: You're a liar!

The SPEAKER: The member for Whitlam will withdraw.

Mr Stephen Jones: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Just before I call the Leader of the Opposition, what I can't do is enable him to continue question time in a debating format. I can't do that. The Prime Minister has added to an answer. The matter cannot be debated. I'll call the Leader of the Opposition and we'll see how we go.
PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:27): I wish to give a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER: Does the Leader of the Opposition claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr ALBANESE: I do.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition may proceed on that basis.

Mr ALBANESE: The Prime Minister has suggested that I, as leader of Labor, and the rest of our team voted against the second reading. We did not. He then just suggested we voted against the third reading. We did not. We supported the legislation.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:28): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS

Report No. 15 of 2019-20


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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Pensions and Benefits

The SPEAKER (15:29): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Maribyrnong proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government's unlawful Online Compliance Program – also known as Robodebt.

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

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

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong) (15:29): Today's matter of public importance is one in which I wish to have a conversation not just with the parliament but with the people of Australia. I want to talk about a Federal Court case from yesterday which has significantly altered the landscape of this government's welfare compliance crackdowns. I want to talk about the problems that this case has revealed in the government's shocking administration of welfare. I want to talk about the context, the damage, and I want to talk about the future and where we go from here.

For four years, Labor has complained about robodebt. We've spoken about the problems and the unfairness. Many thousands of examples have been revealed. The media have been
diligent. In recent months we have formed the view not only that robodebt was incompetently and unfairly run but also that, indeed, the very basis of the scheme was illegal and unlawful. The government ignored us, as they do. They attacked us, as they do. They laughed at us, as they do. But yesterday the Federal Court made a significant decision. It found that the government's robodebt scheme, in fundamental features, is invalid; it is actually unlawful. I congratulate Victoria Legal Aid for taking the case and the plaintiff, Deanna Amato, for taking the matter of robodebt against the Commonwealth of Australia to the Federal Court.

The court specifically held, and I paraphrase: 'Any demand for payment of an alleged debt first made by the government to Centrelink recipients is not validly made in circumstances where the information relied upon by the Commonwealth is not capable of satisfying the decision-maker that a debt was owed or preconditions for penalties were present.' I say to the people of Australia: what this means is that your government, the current government of Australia, has been engaging in illegal, systemic extortion of hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Australians. This case establishes beyond doubt that many thousands of our fellow Australians, people who rely upon the safety net of the social security system and of Centrelink—students on Austudy, farmers, single mums, the unemployed and people who in many cases are marginal, vulnerable and down on their luck—have been put upon in an unlawful manner. They have been not just treated unfairly, not just treated incompetently, but the recipients of illegal treatment from their own government.

Today I wish to explain to Australians why yesterday's court decision is most important to the people of Australia. The government introduced an online compliance scheme following the 2015-16 budget. I suspect it was on the basis of relying on computers to get rid of human jobs and, indeed, to whistle up money for creaky budget surpluses. On 11 February 2017 it renamed robodebt 'employment income confidence scheme'. The community know this is robodebt. At its heart, robodebt essentially calculates a Centrelink recipient's entitlement during the relevant fortnight—the fortnight in which they're entitled to the money—by reference to the total amount earned by the recipient across the financial year, and assumes what they earned in a year can simply be averaged across every fortnight of the payment. The court found that this is invalid. Not only did the government get the facts wrong; more significantly, the government of Australia has been told by the Federal Court, in consent orders, that the power to issue these robodebt notices doesn't exist. The power to issue every debt notice doesn't exist.

Before I discuss the import of this case further, I want to draw the attention of the Australian people and the parliament to the fact that the Federal Court issued consent orders. The nub of the consent orders is that the Commonwealth didn't argue against the plaintiff; they agreed. At the last minute, they agreed. The Commonwealth consented to orders which said that what they were doing was unlawful. They agreed it was illegal. The government agreed in the Amato proceeding that the algorithm they were using was not the valid basis on which to issue debt notices. They agreed that the debt notice issued to Ms Amato was not valid. The Commonwealth agreed that the garnishing of Ms Amato's tax return was unlawful. They agreed Ms Amato was owed interest on the tax payment which was garnished up until the date on which she received the tax payment. The government agreed that what they were doing was unlawful. But this comes a little late. Nine hundred thousand people have received
these debt notices generated on an averaging of annual income and cursory and desultory checking.

If anyone says, 'Oh, well, they do a lot of checking,' let me tell you about the facts in Ms Amato's case. They sent a notice to her at an address at which she had not lived for three years. They then sent it by registered post and it was sent back to them—'doesn't live here'. So the government just kept sending notices to that address. Then they rang her. They left a message to ring, and didn't say what about. In the end, on the third call, they didn't even leave a message. On that basis they let the ship sail, on that cursory, perfunctory reversal of onus. This government has relied on speculative judgement by simply and arrogantly assuming that what one person earns in a year can be averaged over every fortnight, and therefore someone who has lumpy income and may be eligible for Centrelink in one fortnight and not another owes the Commonwealth money. No, they don't. And for the record, let us not pretend that the Commonwealth hasn't been told that these are problems. But now we have the reality of it.

Did you know that, if a bank sent hundreds of thousands of letters demanding money unlawfully, this government would eventually say something? They'd probably call for the CEO and the chair to go—not a bad idea. If this government presided over a scheme where people took their own lives as a result of the pressure, where mental harm is caused and where the stigma meant people couldn't get jobs because they carry debt notices, this government would complain. But this is actually what has happened with robodebt. Of course, we've got the poor old minister who says, 'I'm not going to apologise.' What he really means is that he's not going to apologise for the mistakes of his predecessors—but now it's on his watch.

Now we move to what needs to be done in the future. The government MPs sitting opposite will have constituents, like we will, who have received these robodebt notices. What are you in the government going to tell these people who've been served notices which may well be unlawful? What are you going to tell them to do? Are you going to tell them to seek a refund? Are you going to tell them to join a class action? Or are you going to tell them: 'No, go away. I'm not apologising for anything'? This is the question now arising out of this case. How long did the government know that it was unlawful? They consented at the Federal Court hearing. When did they form the view that this was unlawful?

Mr Buchholz: It was 2011.

Mr SHORTEN: The member for Wright, who I normally like, made the interjection '2011'. That's not true; no more lies from the government on this. Taking out the human fact-checking and simply relying on the algorithm happened on this government's watch. So how long did they know? Furthermore, if we move beyond 'how long did they know', how many people are affected by this? How much money will have to be refunded?

We've got the talkative minister here. This is now his problem. How much money will you spend hiring public servants that you got rid of to review the cases? How much money do you think you're going to have to pay back to people? The minister said, somewhat Morrison-esque, in shire-like language, that it's a small cohort. Well, how big is the cohort, Minister? And then you go further. Who is responsible for this mistake? How long will it take to pay the refunds? How much will you have to pay? Labor says, as a result of this case, that a wrong has been done to nearly one million people by its government behaving unlawfully. This is the government of Australia behaving unlawfully to hundreds of thousands of its own citizens. What a shame.
Fortnightly income averaging should never have been allowed to be the basis for Centrelink to determine that a debt existed. There was no onus on welfare recipients to establish they did not owe a debt based purely on fortnightly income averaging. The Commonwealth has breached its duty of care to vulnerable welfare recipients by alleging that robodebts were real debts when they weren't. The Commonwealth has been unjustly enriching itself under the robodebt scheme. It should refund the money it has taken unlawfully, plus interest. For the record with the class action: the Commonwealth is a model litigant. How long are they going to spend more taxpayer money fighting for an indefensible scheme, causing more pain and trauma for people who have been illegally treated? And, by the way, the Federal Court gave interest to Ms Amato for garnishing her tax. Every day the government doesn't fix the matter, it is probably costing the taxpayer another $100,000 a day in interest payments; that's bigger than your internet bill!

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (15:39): The government has a lawful requirement to protect the integrity of the welfare system. The shadow minister is leaving the House! This issue is of such importance to him that he can't even be bothered to stay in the chamber for it! That says everything we need to know about the member for Maribyrnong's approach on this. It is all politics and no substance. He loves the press conference. He loves to stand there with the CFMMEU's sacked lawyers and say, 'We're standing up.' But when the opportunity comes for him to raise this as a matter of public importance, where is the member for Maribyrnong? Where is he? He's walked out the door and left a bunch of his little insignificant minions behind to carp from the backbench. Well, that says everything we need to know about the member for Maribyrnong.

Let me remind the House exactly why the member for Maribyrnong just scuppered out of here like a little boy who just wet his trousers. It's because of this media release from the member for Maribyrnong and the member for Sydney on 29 June 2011—from both of them, together. Let's read the media release, shall we? And let's come to understand exactly where online compliance and data matching came from. This was on 29 June 2011:

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

Those who are identified as having debts and who haven't made repayment arrangements with Centrelink may have their tax refunds garnisheed when they lodge their income tax return.

"But if people fail to come to an arrangement to settle their debts, the Government has a responsibility to taxpayers to recover that money."

That's it! That's where the joining of Centrelink and the ATO was started by those two members. Those two members who sit opposite here and jump up and down and yell that this is terrible commenced that process.
Last week, of course, the member for Maribyrnong and journalist Patricia Karvelas had an interview:

KARVELAS: You've spoken today about how much harm this program has done. Do you regret creating it and do you regret not opposing it before the election?
SHORTEN: Oh, Patricia, Patricia!
KARVELAS: That's a reasonable question, Labor created—
SHORTEN: Labor didn't create—
KARVELAS: No, Labor did create robodebt.
SHORTEN: No, well—
KARVELAS: I know; I've watched it. It did.

Those opposite love to say one thing when they aspire to be in government and another thing when they're in opposition.

Who could forget the good shadow minister, weeks before the election, making that fateful comment:

We want to make sure that people aren't receiving welfare to which they're not entitled to. And no one gets a leave pass on that.

So before the election, the then Leader of the Opposition and now shadow minister was saying that no-one would get a leave pass. After the election loss, apparently everyone gets a leave pass. After the election loss, apparently everyone gets a leave pass. Apparently, there is no longer a requirement for the Commonwealth to lawfully collect debts if no Australian speaks to the department. Apparently they get a leave pass. What else should we give a leave pass on? What else is optional? How about tax returns? Are tax returns now optional? Is that the next step that we'll go on?

Let's make it very, very clear: the federal government spends $180 billion of taxpayers' money to support Australia's social safety net—about a third of total annual government expenditure. The average Australian makes a contribution of $7,610 of their income to our welfare system, or just over nine per cent of their earnings. The Morrison government has not and will not lose sight of the fact that Australians contribute more than a month of their working year to support the welfare system. We're able to support that primarily because this side of the House is engaged with and knows how to operate a strong economy and ensure strong economic management.

A strong economy enables a strong welfare system. But right now, as of 31 October, 950,000 Australians have 1.6 million social welfare debts, totalling $5.3 billion. What those opposite want us to do is just give everyone a leave pass, apparently. Everyone gets a leave pass. Let's look at the leave passes that those opposite want to give. Those opposite sit there and wet their pants when someone comes along with hard questions. I see them over there now—a whole bunch of bedwetters. Right now there are 310,000 Newstart allowance recipients who have an amount of $1.121 billion owing. That was at 30 June this year. Do they get a leave pass? Do they, I ask bedwetters over there? Or do we have a lawful responsibility to protect the integrity of the welfare system and to ensure that the hard-earned money of taxpayers, which they pay in tax to the Commonwealth and from which welfare is provided, is provided sensibly to those who are in need in terms of welfare? According to the shadow minister, everyone now apparently gets a leave pass.
Labor's message right now is: don't engage with the Commonwealth, don't speak to them, because you get a leave pass. Don't bother engaging and saying, 'Here's some detail to substantiate the income that was earned and the welfare that was received.' That is the message that the Labor Party is giving now, and it is appalling. Australians rightly expect welfare recipients to receive the correct amount of support they're entitled to—nothing more, nothing less. Australians expect the right people to get the right amount of money at the right time. It was this government that ended Labor's lucky-dip approach to the ATO data-matching income compliance efforts, where literally hundreds of thousands of identified income data discrepancies and potential debts to taxpayers were simply ignored and simply not pursued. Our compliance activity is central to the community having trust in the administration of welfare payments and ensuring that the right people get the right amount of money at the right time.

Mr Burns: It's working really well!

Mr ROBERT: Remember, we will continue to use data-matching to line up a tax return with the welfare an individual Australians has received as the basis to ascertain whether a debt may exist. Letters then go out to Australians and, for the benefit of the House I will read one again, as I've done previously in the House, but those opposite, with their tin ears, have clearly forgotten. Letters Australians receive sound like this:
We need you to check and update your past income information.
We need to make sure you received the right amount of payments from us in the past.
The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has given us information about how much income you earned from work in the past.
Why did they receive that? Because in 2011 those opposite commenced the joining up of Centrelink and the ATO. The letter continues:
The information from the ATO is different to the information you reported to us.
We need your help to check and update your information …
You need to do this even if you haven't received any Centrelink payments for a while.
That is the key. We will engage with Australians.

Last week, the Commonwealth made a refinement to this process so that income compliance will not be used solely to crystallise a debt from the Commonwealth and further proof points will be used. We are now going back, to ensure fairness and consistency for all Australians, to look at any decisions that have been made in that limited group who did not engage with the department at all, to connect with them and seek further proof points. My message to Australians is that my department will work through this sensibly and practically, and will be in contact with Australians from this limited group who may have been impacted.

This process began in 2011 under the Labor Party. Refinements have been made continually since that date and further refinements were made last week as we continue to operate one of the most targeted welfare systems in the world.

Ms McBRIDE (Dobell) (15:49): I rise to speak on this matter of public importance brought by the member for Maribyrnong on the government's unlawful online compliance program, also known as robodebt. I'll start by correcting the record. The minister has called
them 'refinements'. What the minister has done is remove the human oversight. It is not a refinement; it's a corruption. That's what they've done.

The Morrison government has been sprung illegally standing over the Australian public for millions of dollars with its toxic robodebt scheme. Something that we on this side of the House have suspected for some time and that Labor has been saying for months was handed down in a formal judgement by the Federal Court. It is now time for the government to stop spinning, stop denying there are any problems with the scheme and outline to the public how the ill-gotten funds will be repaid to the robodebt's innocent victims. The minister quoted from a sample letter that people receive. I also would like to quote from a letter; it was received by a DSP recipient. It said: 'At the moment, Task Force Integrity are talking to people in Long Jetty about how they can help us stop welfare fraud. We know that most people receiving a payment from Centrelink do the right thing by making sure their details are up to date.' This letter with an AFP crest on it was received by a grandmother who was the victim of a major motor vehicle accident and who lives in my electorate. This is the kind of heavy-handed letter that people receive.

The Federal Court yesterday handed down its decision on Deanna Amato's case, confirming that the government has no legal basis to extort money from its own citizens using its harsh, unfair algorithm, which the minister calls a refinement. Last week, the government conceded it is unlawful, by putting a freeze on its defining features—income averaging and reverse practical onus of proof—when it realised it couldn't come up with any legal argument to the Victorian legal aid matter. We know for a fact that the suspension of the scheme was a reaction to legal advice the government received in respect of the Amato court case and the looming Gordon legal class action. Clearly the minister doesn't want to hear what the Federal Court said.

This is long-delayed justice for Australians who have for the past three years suffered at the hands of the coalition's rogue robodebt. It has wrought a trail of carnage on Australians, including students, people with a disability and the unemployed—those in need of assistance, not a kick in the guts. Now Australians need answers. The Morrison government owes its citizens the courtesy of explaining how these people will be contacted and how they will be paid back. Just this Monday, Minister Stuart Robert declared in response to a question to the House that this government does not apologise for robodebt. Does it apologise now or does it disagree with the Federal Court?

Recently, I was contacted by Tanya, who is a 48-year-old single parent from my electorate. She lives in Bateau Bay. On 7 November she was sent two separate debt notices. One was for the period 2017-18, for $4,496, and one was for the period 2018-19, for $7,070. She was told that unless she repaid the entire date within one month—by 7 December—Centrelink would start garnishing her payments. However, she was not told how much would be garnished from her payments, leaving her in immense financial distress. What sort of Christmas are Tanya and her family going to have with this hanging over their heads?

Christian Porter acknowledged in his National Press Club address last week that the government had received new legal advice in light of the Federal Court actions. Naturally, there are some questions which arise from these concessions. Did the government fail to check robodebt was legal before they created the scheme? It is a rogue scheme that has sent letters to 900,000 people of whom the department has admitted that roughly 20 per cent
resulted in no debt at all. Did the government receive advice but ignore its own counsel and decide to proceed with unjustly enriching itself at the expense of the most vulnerable in our society? Will the Attorney-General now apologise for robodebt, seeing as he refused to do so after a 2017 Senate inquiry found the scheme was destined to fail and should be suspended immediately? Now the scheme is finally being reversed. Even if the government omitted to check the scheme was legally watertight when they set it up, it's not as if they haven't had fair warning since. The Morrison government simply cannot claim they were ignorant of the shaky foundations of the scheme. They've had nearly three years of calls from legal figures, advocacy groups, community groups, unions, academics, two Commonwealth Ombudsman reports and three Senate inquiries. What more evidence do they need to know that this is illegal and that they are attacking the most vulnerable people in our society? They must apologise. They must pay the people back.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport) (15:54): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this MPI, 'the government's unlawful online compliance program, also known as robodebt'. We get caught in this Canberra bubble. That's our job. We'll fight this out, absolutely. If anyone still listening into the broadcast of this debate takes anything away, please take away this: if you are in any doubt as to whether or not you are in breach with your Centrelink payments, my advice, and the advice of our government, is to please contact Centrelink and seek clarification from someone to put your mind at rest. If you've been contacted by someone to say that you're in the position of being garnisheed, and you think it is unlawful or heavy-handed, please contact Centrelink and clarify those points.

If the government has done anything as a result of a court action, I do take on the minister's earlier comments that we need to address it sensibly and practically to make sure that if there are wrongs then they are righted. It's important also to know that, in the conversation around those who potentially get caught up in this from a Centrelink perspective, there is probably more that unites this government and the opposition. If people have received, and continue to receive, payments that they know should not lawfully have come to them, I think both sides of the House are united in thinking that our welfare payment system is designed for those people who need it and is not designed or intended for those people who take advantage of the system.

We are a generous nation. We spend $180 billion on our social safety net, and we can and will continue to do that because we have a strong economy. We'll continue to make sure that those who are poor and vulnerable are looked after by this government. But right now, as of 31 October, over 950,000 Australians have 1.6 million social welfare debts, and the figure we're looking to recover in the area in question is about $5.3 billion. I reiterate the point that if you have been served with a debt and you think the debt has been miscalculated incorrectly, please contact Centrelink. Replace those unknowns and fears that you have so you can reduce those fears at Christmas.

I want to make a point before I run out of time. I did interrupt the member for Mariibyrnong when he was giving his opening address. It was unparliamentary of me and I should not have done it. I should have waited until I got to the dispatch box to make my point. But there's been a fair bit in the media with reference to commentary from both the member for Sydney and the member who led the charge, and I'd like to read into the Hansard something linked to my
comment, my interjection, about 2011, when they were in government. Bill Shorten and Tanya Plibersek are the godfather and godmother of the automated data-matching process, which they created in 2011. When jointly announcing Labor’s new automated data-matching process, they said:

… if people fail to come to an arrangement to settle their debts, the Government has a responsibility to taxpayers to recover that money.

So this is not the first time language of our sort has been used in the public domain. They also said:

The automation of this process will free up resources and result in more people being referred to the tax garnishee process, retrieving more outstanding debt on behalf of taxpayers.

That was on 29 June 2011. Prior to that, the member for McMahon said:

It is important that the Government explores different means of debt recovery to ensure that those who have received more money than they are entitled to repay their debt.

Basically—and this is how I opened—those comments have all been mentioned by those on the other side. There is a way forward on this. There are more things that unite either side of this House around the retrieval of debt, and we’ll right the wrongs. (Time expired)

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (16:00): I’m going to assume that the member for Wright has read his side’s briefing notes and is not deliberately trying to mislead the House. But I’m just going to clarify something here. This government is really good at being really loose with the truth when they get caught out—and they’ve been caught out with robodebt. The government has admitted that robodebt is illegal, as it settled a legal challenge before the courts. When they do that, the first thing they do is scream ‘Labor, Labor, Labor!’ It’s hard to figure out what these ministers are for, because all they talk about is Labor. They try and blame Labor for something they introduced three years ago, which is unlawful and is nothing like what Labor did.

Let me explain something to the member for Wright. Labor introduced data-matching because data-matching became possible. It was a really smart, really clever thing to do. But when the data matched, a human being looked at the case and worked out whether there was a case to answer. A human being was involved. It was the Morrison government that removed the human being from the equation and turned the seeking of debt that was owed into what is now known as robodebt—‘robodebt’ because people were not involved. They did something unbelievably stupid. A grade 3 maths student would know that this wouldn’t work, that’s how stupid it is. They assumed that you could take the tax office figures of how much a person earned over a year and average it over a year in which a person received Centrelink benefits as if the person earned that money equally for the whole year. Let me put it this way: I started four or five years ago and I was unemployed for three months. I received Centrelink benefits for three months, I told Centrelink when I worked and everything was above board and fine. Then I got a job, went off Centrelink benefits and earned $20,000 for the rest of that financial year, but this crazy group of people allowed robodebt to average that $20,000 and assume that I earned $400 for every week that I was unemployed. It is dumb. It was never going to work, it was always going to be ruled illegal, you were always going to have to pay back money you didn’t owe, you were always going to be sprung.

For three years, virtually everybody has been telling you that. Once again it is the arrogance of: ‘We’re right, we don’t have to listen. We’re going for the surplus. Never mind if
we are raining carnage on people who don't owe any money.' And now, of course, it's 'a minor refinement' and it's 'a small cohort'. Well, 900,000 letters have gone out for robodebt. Human Services says 600,000 of them were based on this flawed and now illegal system and 20 per cent of the debts were found not to be owed. That's not counting all the people that paid it because they couldn't deal with it. That's not counting all the people who, because of their life circumstances or because they simply couldn't prove they didn't have a debt, paid it. You've got to remember that robodebt sends a letter— with no people attached —and tells you the government believes you owe it money, and you have to prove you don't. The government doesn't come to you and say, 'You owe the debt because of this and this,' you have to prove that you don't.

I have a person here who paid back $52,000. He doesn't believe he owes it. He was working part time and receiving a part disability support pension. He was reporting his income as he needed to do. He simply cannot provide the figures. They're asking for records of bank accounts that he closed over seven years ago. This is a person who believed he was doing everything right. He paid that $52,000. And there are many, many more. We all hear the stories of people who paid because they couldn't face it. They couldn't handle the stress of it. We know that. We heard from families whose loved ones have basically collapsed because of this. Another person, Rahwa, had a debt of $52,000, according to the government. We looked at it and thought, 'That's not right.' We got in touch with the minister. Entire debt waived. Wrong. 'Sorry we sent you a debt letter for $52,000, Rahwa. We got it wrong.'

This has been a debacle. Again, anybody who thinks about what it is would understand that it cannot work. Centrelink calculates what you receive on a fortnightly basis, based on your income in a fortnight, and the tax office only has figures for the year. They cannot be compared. It's comparing apples and oranges. It was stupid. The court has finally called you out and you are going to have to pay a hell of a lot of it back.

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (16:05): The federal government spends over $180 billion to support Australia's social safety net, about a third of Australia's total government expenditure annually. Australian taxpayers foot the bill of around $111 billion of social security payments as part of this. Taxpayers—in fact, all citizens—rightly expect that those engaged in the system are able to receive the amount of support for which they are eligible, nothing less but also nothing more. As of just the end of last month, over 950,000 Australians had 1.6 million social welfare debts totalling $5.3 billion. Recovering overpayments is a fundamental part of our welfare system and a fundamental duty of the government. When someone has a debt, the government is legally obliged to pursue recovery of that debt, just as the government is obliged to pursue recovery of tax debts when people have failed to pay their full tax liability. This debt recovery process has been a feature of our welfare system for over 30 years through successive governments.

As announced last week, the government has taken action to amend the income compliance program. The Minister for Government Services last week announced further refinements as part of the government's ongoing commitment to continually strengthen and improve the program. The program has already undergone a number of iterations and refinements since its inception in response to community feedback, and I anticipate it will continue to do so. The changes announced by the minister last week will make the program more robust by requiring additional evidence when using income information to identify potential overpayments. This
means a debt will no longer be raised where the only information the department is relying on is the averaging of ATO information. However, income compliance activities are not ceasing and nor should they. The department will still review payments for discrepancies. For those debts raised to date which the department calculated solely through income averaging, debt recovery will be frozen and the debt will be reassessed with additional information. Services Australia will contact affected customers as they are identified. This process will take time as individual records will be checked, particularly for complex cases. Most of these cases will be ones where people did not fully engage with the department after they were initially sent the discrepancy notice. For reviews that are underway, the department will continue to work with customers to complete those reviews.

Decision-making going forward will not rely on income-averaging as the sole basis to determine the debts. The decision will not, however, affect the government's use of data-matching between income reported to DHS and that reported to the ATO to seek clarification of income whilst receiving a welfare payment. The department will continue to use income-averaging as part of a range of options to ask a welfare recipient to engage with DHS if there is a discrepancy. Importantly—and this is worth stressing—people can and should always ask to review decisions or provide new information at any stage of the process. The government has a responsibility to collect any overpayments. This is central to the community having trust in the administration of this safety net. We will maintain the government's focus on returning overpayments to our taxpayers and balance this with fairness and transparency in our compliance activities.

Members of the House will recall that it was those opposite who announced in 2011 Labor's automatic data-matching processes, beginning the joining of the data streams between the ATO and Centrelink. A joint press release on 29 June 2011 by the member for Sydney and the member for Maribyrnong, titled 'New data matching to recover millions in welfare dollars', announced the scheme. The member for Sydney is quoted in that press release saying:

… if people fail to come to an arrangement to settle their debts, the Government has a responsibility to taxpayers to recover that money.

The member for Maribyrnong is quoted in the same press release saying:

The automation of this process will free up resources and result in more people being referred to the tax garnishee process, retrieving more outstanding debt on behalf of taxpayers.

It is also worth noting that the opposition refused to commit to abolishing the current system during the election campaign.

The debt recovery process has been a feature of our welfare system for over 30 years through successive governments. There is nothing sinister about this. Government funds are not unlimited and they ultimately all come from the taxpayer. The average Australian who works contributes over $7,600 of their income, or one month of their earnings, towards welfare payments, and every dollar of overpayment to one welfare recipient is $1 less available for other welfare recipients; it's $1 less available for other worthy causes, like listing new medicines on the PBS or supporting the National Disability Insurance Scheme or responding to the findings of the aged-care royal commission.

**Dr MULINO** (Fraser) (16:10): Can I start by commending the shadow minister and the member for Maribyrnong, who was so diligent in pursuing this issue over recent weeks and
months and who has brought the government to account on a shameful scheme. Can I also commend the earlier speakers on my side, the members for Dobell and Parramatta. But mostly, can I commend ordinary Australians, like Deanna Amato—the real Australians who are holding this government to account. Can I commend Deanna Amato for having the courage to go to court to show that what this government has done to a scheme that had been working effectively is to make it not only grotesque and inhuman but unlawful.

Let's return to the beginning of this MPI discussion, to what can only be described as a rather disturbing, bizarre and insensitive speech by the minister. It was a speech which you would not have expected to have been delivered by somebody who had just lost a court case which showed that the scheme that had been working is now, shamefully, putting thousands of Australians at a massive disadvantage—and these are our most disadvantaged Australians. If you had heard that speech and all of the frothing at the mouth and all of the abuse he hurled at others, you would expect he was the one who had been wronged, not Deanna Amato. It was a bizarre performance from a man who cannot stand to be shown up. I expect that, if Deanna Amato were in the chamber, she may have copped a bit of abuse.

And I go back to one of the comments by the member for Wright—that this is a bubble issue. Of all the things I've talked about today, of all the things I've talked about this week, this is the least characterisable as a bubble issue. To reinforce that point, I go back to some quotes by Deanna Amato. After winning her case against the government, against the minister's scheme, she said:

You can feel so small and helpless next to the government, but I am so glad that the unfair and ultimately unlawful aspects of this system have been brought to light.

She also said:

I've proven my innocence—

She shouldn't have to prove her innocence, because she'd done nothing wrong—

… but also proven that there are reasons why you need all the facts before you can demand debt payments from people …

Here we have the words of a real person living in non-Canberra-bubble Australia. Those opposite should not be so quick to dismiss this issue when they have been shown to have ruined a scheme that worked sensibly and cautiously in their brazen rush to bring more dollars into their coffers.

Fortunately, after the minister spoke, the tone calmed down, but there was a certain intellectual dishonesty of the speakers that followed—the member for Wright and the member for Wentworth—who harped on about the point that there are going to be no free passes and that all they're doing is trying to collect money rightfully owed to the government. But let's go back to the comments of Deanna Amato: 'I've proven my innocence.' The whole point here is that we have a scheme which has had the human element taken out and the onus of proof shoved onto people in a very intimidatory way that is not only insensitive and shameful but unlawful. And those opposite act as if nothing's happened: 'Nothing to look at here! There are not tens of thousands of Australians disadvantaged in an unlawful way. We're just collecting appropriate debts.' No, you're not.

What you've done is taken a scheme that everybody in this place agrees should occur—yes, we should have different government departments talking to each other and, if there has been
an appropriately identified debt, let's approach that debt in a sensitive, appropriate way. What we have said from the start is that it is not appropriate to change that system by taking human checking out of it. It is not appropriate to change that system in such a way that the likelihood of errors goes through the roof. In fact, we don't even know how many errors there have been through that system. And it is not appropriate to change that system in a way which changes the onus of proof and makes Australians feel like criminals and shames them simply for, at some point in their life, taking part in a welfare system which I hope everybody in this place would agree is an important part of our social safety net.

So, to the speakers who followed the minister and his rather rabid speech: no, this is not an issue of whether or not it is appropriate to collect debts. This is about whether the system that does that should be appropriate and sensitive and done in a way which does not make mistakes and does not put the burden onto Australians who already have too many burdens put on them by this shameful government.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (16:15): I welcome the opportunity to have a discussion about Labor's robodebt scheme. I welcome the opportunity to actually address the truth about this important issue and the legacy originating back to the very member who complained just now in this chamber. The reality is that this system was introduced by the Labor Party. This is one of the great untruths that sits at the heart of this discussion, in the member for Maribyrnong's regular commentary in the public square and in his constant effort to distance himself from the legacy of the scheme that he introduced, and then to hold this government to account rather than take a modicum of responsibility.

There is no better example of this than the recent interview the member for Maribyrnong had with Patricia Karvelas on ABC Radio. I'm going to try and do my best Patricia Karvelas impersonation—and perhaps even my best member-for-Maribyrnong impersonation—and I'm not so rehearsed:

KARVELAS: You've spoken today about how much harm this program has done. Do you regret creating it and do you regret not opposing it before the election?
SHORTEN: Oh, Patricia, Patricia!
KARVELAS: That's a reasonable question, Labor created—
SHORTEN: Labor didn't create—
KARVELAS: No, Labor did create robodebt.
SHORTEN: No, well—
KARVELAS: I know; I've watched it. It did.

When you've got the ABC calling out the member for Maribyrnong for dishonesty and for misleading the public, and then he comes and does it inside the parliament as well, you've got to wonder what the basis of their argument is beyond them wanting to distract. For him to come up to the dispatch box to audition for a rehearsal for taking on the lead role—that is the reality of what we've seen today.

I'm actually surprised the Leader of the Opposition allowed this MPI to be moved, because it gave the member for Maribyrnong an opportunity to come up to the dispatch box and show that he could at least cobble together a coherent sentence and that he is actually capable of prosecuting an argument. I don't agree he should be in that job either, but you've got to pay deference where it's due and acknowledge talent where it's due. What's really clear is that he
hasn't changed his mindset from the election. He went to the last election with a platform saying that we needed more than $387 billion of new taxes imposed on Australian taxpayers. What he doesn't seem to have any regard for is the $180 billion that's paid out, by Australian taxpayers, for a degree of social equity to help those people in need. He is not interested in following up or making sure that that money is spent, or, if there is an inappropriate allocation, recovering that money for taxpayers. He'd rather just go and hit people's hip pockets again and again and again. That's the legacy.

The really tragic part of this motion today is the stories that sit behind it of what happens when people have a problem. The reality is that people did have a problem with the system—and there were people who did. They came into the Goldstein electorate office, and we sat down, worked through the issues, contacted Centrelink, worked through the department and got as best a resolution as possible. What we did was actually try to solve people's problems. Sometimes it didn't happen as quickly as we wanted, but we got to where we needed to go in every case. Compare that to what Labor members did when a person who had a problem with the system came to them for help. Their first response wasn't: 'How can we help? Can we contact the department? Can we solve a problem?' Their first response every single time was: 'You've got a problem? How would you like to go and talk to the media about it?' What they did was use vulnerable people as puppets for their nefarious political agenda to get at the government. That's the most low-down, despicable act anybody can engage in. That is disgraceful behaviour—using people as human fodder and pawns in their despicable political games to fight their own scheme. That's why people on this side of the chamber have no regard or respect for their narrative and no regard for the dishonesty that they bring into this place. That's why, at every point, the Australian people see through the charade of the opposition and the agenda that they raise. That's why we will continue to fight, because we are not only fighting for the people who need assistance and support, who are vulnerable and who we make sure we give assistance to when they need it; we're also fighting for the Australian taxpayers and public, who they have no regard for and take no interest in.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (16:20): I think we need to take the tone of this argument today down, because we are talking about real people. We've had impersonations. We've had impressions. I'll give the chamber a tip: it's pretty easy to do an impression of the member for Goldstein. 'Why aren't I a minister? I should be a minister! I need to be a minister now!' Insert that in every speech.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr DICK: His colleagues are laughing. I must have struck a nerve there, just a tad. But my money's always on the quiet ones, the member for Fairfax and the member for Boothby. I know who's circling around the minister, Angus Taylor, who's next in line; it's not the member for Goldstein.

In closing the argument today, it's been really interesting. We've heard a lot of bluster, insults and personal attacks. We've heard a lot, of course, about, 'Labor started the scheme eight or nine years ago so it's all Labor's fault, even though we've been in government six years.' But what we haven't heard at all from one member of the government is: 'We got it wrong, and we apologise to the hundreds of thousands of people.' The member for Goldstein said, 'Well, they would just come to my office, and we would talk to someone and it would all get fixed.' That didn't happen. What alternative universe do they live in? I will tell you what
did happen: when people did go public and went to the media, magically, it was solved. I know that when you write to this minister you don't get a response. I've got letters to the minister, Stuart Robert, where he has not responded once—not once—on behalf of constituents. Do they think that's acceptable—that a member of parliament can write to a minister and not get an acknowledgment?

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr DICK: He's agreeing with me, so I'll give him 10 out of 10. I bet if he was the minister, Minister Goldstein would write back to me.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr DICK: He'd do anything to become a minister; we know that. In the other audition that we heard today—from the member for Wentworth, who was complaining that he wasn't made a minister after the election—the defence that we heard time and time again was not about real people and was not about individual cases. They weren't talking about people. There were certainly no apologies.

We know that it was through the leadership of the member for Maribyrnong talking about this issue, coming to forums, sitting down with people and working hard to get the government to take a position on this—on the toxic robodebt which they were in charge of and which they oversaw. Time and time again they said, 'There's nothing to see here; we know best.' All those snobs opposite—through you, Mr Deputy Speaker Hogan—who were looking down on people on welfare continue in today's debate to lecture us about the lifters and the leaners and all those people.

We on this side have a completely different approach. When people don't deserve treatment from a government, we speak out. We say it is not good enough. We saw that time and time again—the families, the pensioners, the grandmothers and the grandfathers who worked their entire lives paid their taxes and did the right thing, only for this greedy and selfish government to use some sort of shady and back-alley type of behaviour to scare people into paying money. The onus of proof was on the person with the debt. I sat with people who allegedly owed thousands of dollars. Do you know what? We did ring the department and we did make representations, and we were told that they still owed the money. They didn't owe a dollar. Not one member of the government can get up and apologise to those people. I know—through you, Mr Deputy Speaker—that you all had those people in your own electorates. They are all coming into your offices. I bet you secretly sat with them and said: 'Oh, I'm not really sure why this happened. I've got to look into it for you. Oh, gee, the minister needs to lift their game.' Not one of you spoke out on behalf of them—not once. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Thousands of ordinary, hardworking Australians were punished, and then a court of law found that you acted illegally. Not one of them had the decency to get up in today's debate and apologise for what they put tens of thousands of people through. I say: shame on members of the government. When I was growing up I was taught by my parents that when you made a mistake you owned up to it and apologised for it. We know that doesn't happen with the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. We know that he can't even bear to look anyone in the face and say, 'I stuffed up.' It's always someone else's fault to this government. I'm glad the court case has happened. I'm glad the Labor Party has stood up to the government. We will continue to do it every single day of this term.
Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (16:25): It's been a very long week, and tempers are fraying at the end of a very busy week, but we are continuing to do what people put us here to do, and that is to be wise and sage with the way we manage taxpayers' dollars. It's not our money; it's their money. It is taxpayers' money. Governments don't have their own money; we are managing theirs. Income compliance measures are the duty and responsibility of any government.

People in this chamber can sometimes be selective in the way they rewrite history. We can all play that game. There was a bit of schadenfreude and a bit of own-goal activity by the member for Maribyrnong today when he brought in this MPI. I had the opportunity of going back through the records, and the member for Maribyrnong, the member for Sydney and the member for McMahon have multiple quotations regarding their initiation and almost their pride in instituting a robodebt program and automation. Speakers on the other side have referenced the court case. We've all read about Deanna Amato, and well done her. It's a question of the young, little person beats the giant—David and Goliath, except it's Deanna and Goliath. It has proved a point. But this automation, which is meant to be the sin of this side of parliament, actually happened in 2011. The member for Sydney said on 29 June 2011: If people fail to come to an arrangement to settle their debts, the Government has a responsibility to taxpayers to recover that money.

The member for Maribyrnong himself said:
The automation of this process—
these are his own words—
will free up resources and result in more people being referred to the tax garnishee process, retrieving more outstanding debt on behalf of taxpayers.

The member for McMahon mentioned:
It is important that the Government explores different means of debt recovery to ensure that those who have received more money than they are entitled to repay their debt.

We are responsible for managing income support for 950,000 people. That's $180 billion. That is a huge slice out of all taxpayers' incomes, so it's our duty to monitor and do this. There have been refinements over many years, even including refinements by the party that initiated this, and that is the other side. In fact, compliance activities have been going for 30 years. This is not new; it's just that, as I said, refinements have been made.

Human review does occur in current processes. The people who have discrepancies identified are sent a letter, they have to engage in the process and they are given the opportunity to correct the data that has been collected about them. I too, like many on the other side and many on this side, have had members of the public who got a real shock when they got the letter. But compounding it by not engaging in the process has, in the past, made it worse for them. The system does have an ability for them to appropriately update their data, and then the good officers of Services Australia—talking, walking, breathing people; not computers—assess it and the process moves on from there.

The other thing that we've got to remember is that people have said this wouldn't happen in any other business. That's got some verity to a degree, but the Social Security Act does empower the department to convert an overpayment into a debt. That's why the initial letter talks about a debt.
It is part of our duty as a government to observe what taxpayers are paying, obviously. We have a tax compliance system, and we have a compliance system to monitor the support we give people who are going through a period in their life when they need support. Compliance is part of life, particularly when you look at the amount of money that we commit.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lyne will resume his seat.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (16:30): It being 4.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Climate Change

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (16:30): I rise today to speak on a matter of great importance that is not receiving the attention it deserves from the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government. Climate change is the most pressing issue of our time. Global warming is universal. It affects us all and, as a responsible globalist citizen, Australia must do its part to stem the effects of climate change. I'll be quite honest about this. I do not always agree with the language used in the discussions on climate change. I've witnessed plenty of emergencies in my time as a paediatrician. An emergency to me is a child with meningococcal septicaemia or a baby being born with a cord prolapse or a child with epiglottitis.

I do not believe that we are in a climate emergency as such but the situation is reaching a watershed, a very serious time, and the science is indisputable. Ecosystems are unravelling. The fact that in 2019 we've elected officials spouting nonsense and denying climate change is absolutely ridiculous. We need to listen to the science, and society should stop listening to the imbeciles who deny the science. It sickens me that we have these sorts of people elected from the fringes to places like this. They have no place here and they consistently prove they have very little to contribute to public life.

Climate change and global warming affect us all, from the farmers in rural and regional areas to those who live and work in our metropolitan hubs and along our coastline. The effects of global warming are indiscriminate and unrelenting. I cannot put it more succinctly than the World Wildlife Fund has: global warming is causing temperatures to increase, sea levels to rise, and more frequent and intense extreme weather events. These are indisputable facts supported by science and by the experts, not empty rhetoric from an unqualified and inexperienced individual.

I'm a lover of science. Scientific discoveries have provided amazing medical cures over the years. Without science we wouldn't have addressed the scourge of polio and we wouldn't have vaccines or eradicated smallpox. Science saves lives. Every major medical group across the country and internationally agrees that climate change is costing lives. Make no mistake about it, global warming is putting lives at risk. Rising sea levels are placing some of our near neighbours in the Pacific at risk. Weather events and extreme heatwaves can be fatal to many who are vulnerable in the community, and the collapse of ecosystems on land and in the water places essential resources such as our supply of food at risk. These are not doomsday scenarios; these are the reality we're faced with presently in 2019. Extreme heat is the cause of more than half of all the deaths from natural hazards. We know heatwaves are becoming more intense and prolonged as temperatures continue to rise—the very definition of global warming.
I'm a parent and grandparent. I know what we need to do and it saddens me we're not taking the necessary action to address climate change now. Once again, it is our children and our grandchildren who will inherit our problems, and we owe it to our future generations to take the necessary action now. It's unfair for middle-aged white men in suits—and I realise I fall within that category—to continue to ignore the science and place our children's and grandchildren's futures at risk. On one hand, my generation has benefited much from society. We've benefited from free tertiary education, stable economic growth, the ability to invest in and negatively gear investment properties, the ability to get a tax refund and imputed dividends. The next generation, on the other hand, are being treated poorly. They face stagnant wage growth, an overly expensive housing market and an increasing cost of living. All the white middle-aged men will criticise young people for supporting climate change policies and ordering smashed avo from a cafe on the weekend. We continue to make young people's lives more expensive and we continue to deny action on climate change, placing their futures at risk. I stand with the next generation in saying, 'OK Boomer.' If I can recognise our unfair treatment of the next generation, surely others can.

We need to stop trying to score political points around this discussion on climate change and take action now. The catastrophic events we're seeing in Australia this summer are evidence of that. We need to take action to address global warming, and I'm confident that we can do it in a way that has jobs and growth. (Time expired)

Lindsay Electorate: Employment

Mrs McIntosh (Lindsay) (16:35): Students excelling, industries emerging and jobs created in my electorate of Lindsay have been the overwhelming themes since we were last in this place. Over the last few weeks, people in Lindsay have demonstrated how the Morrison government is backing them, and backing science, technology, engineering and maths. STEM has been at the forefront of two recent local achievements. Preparing our students today for the jobs of the future ensures we have local people in these jobs, building our local economy and avoiding that long commute out of Western Sydney for a good job.

The five students who were part of Team Ascension from Penrith Christian School are putting their skills in STEM to use in the largest STEM competition in the world. Over the last few days, these students competed in Abu Dhabi in the world finals of F1 in Schools, designing software to collaborate, analyse, manufacture and race their miniature F1 cars. I am delighted to inform the House that, out of the 55 teams from around the world, the students from Penrith Christian School won the Best Engineered Car award. I congratulate them for their outstanding achievement.

Investing in STEM in schools is a vital part of ensuring our local students are prepared for the jobs of the future in emerging industries in Western Sydney, including defence, engineering, advanced manufacturing, the space industry and more. Last week, the Minister for Defence Industry and I announced $95 million for Defence Establishment Orchard Hills's new Naval Guided Weapons Maintenance Facilities Project. This new facility will enhance maintenance components for Navy's guided weapons systems for new ships, air warfare destroyers, frigates and future submarines, directly supporting Australian Defence Force personnel and contributing to Australia's security.

The Morrison government is unlocking opportunities for our local community at the forefront of defence technology and advanced manufacturing. We are backing our national
defence industry to create local jobs that keep us safe. This is just one area of emerging industry that will be ready for the current generation of local school students. The $95 million investment in in the Naval Guided Weapons Maintenance Facility is creating 50 jobs, with 95 per cent of the subcontracted work going to locals.

We must continue to equip our young people with the skills in STEM to take on emerging challenges and to ensure Australia's safety and security, and with the opportunities to build a strong economy. The Morrison government recognises the potential of Western Sydney to play a key role in the technologies and industries that will shape our future economy. The Western Sydney international airport, the Sydney Science Park and the Aerotropolis precinct will support emerging industries and advanced manufacturing research in science and space. I have created the Lindsay Jobs of the Future Forum so that we can connect students to these exciting local opportunities in STEM and ensure that they have the education and training needed to take on those jobs. The forum will make sure that students in Lindsay are aware that a career in STEM can take them anywhere around the world, and of the positive impact they can have in their own community.

I am so proud of the work that is being done in STEM in Western Sydney. Every time I meet students, whether it is here in Parliament House or back home in my community, I ask them: 'Who is interested in STEM? Who understands what STEM is?' Today, I may get a third of those in the room putting up their hands. With my Lindsay Jobs of the Future Forum and the work that we're doing by bringing industries and schools together to make sure that children are educated and trained for the future, I want to make sure that all children are putting up their hands and saying that they're interested and have an understanding of STEM, and know what the jobs in the future are that they could get with these skills.

I'm very proud of Team Ascension for taking their talents to Abu Dhabi for the world's biggest STEM competition and I'm very pleased that the Morrison government is investing in the Naval Guided Weapons Maintenance Facility in Orchard Hills. Only the Morrison government will continue to back Western Sydney, investing in our local students so that they can take on the jobs of the future.

Volunteering

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (16:39): I wish to publicly recognise the huge contribution that volunteers make to my Mayo community, South Australia and, indeed, Australia. Every month I travel thousands of kilometres across my electorate, meeting new community groups who have banded together to make their small corner of the world a better place.

Most recently I met with the McLaren Vale hospital volunteers, who raise funds for the McLaren Vale and Districts War Memorial Hospital through the community op-shop. I consider myself an op shop aficionado, and they have an impressive array of second-hand offerings, including electrical goods, thanks to a number of volunteers who have electrical qualifications and can test and tag. I would like to give a shout out to Trevor, who found just the perfect 1990s coffee percolator for my husband. Yes, he likes brewed coffee. The volunteers at the op shop tell me they offer more than just low-cost clothes, shoes and knick-knacks. Many people come in for a chat and a bit of company, and I find that is the case with many volunteer organisations. The McLaren Vale hospital volunteers’ op shop is open Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9 am till 12.30 pm and every first and third Saturday. While you're in town, if you head around the corner, you will also be able to drop in
to the McLaren Vale and Districts RSL and have a chat to Brian, Cliff and Darryl, who provide a free pension advice service to all serving and ex-serving members of the Australian Defence Forces. They also offer a fantastic lunch on Wednesday afternoons.

Wherever I may be travelling in my electorate I am always joined in my car by another very important volunteer—community radio. Community radio is something I'm particularly passionate about because for many years I volunteered at Coast FM, and I've got to say I loved every minute it. Community radio is truly about community. It's the only place where you can have a jazz program, a heavy metal program and a gardening segment on within the same two hours. I can be at Happy FM one week chatting to Janet, a retired teacher who's passionate about opportunities for local young people, and then heading to Fleurieu FM the next week to talk about surfing and pet dogs with 11-year-old host Ryder. It's also a pleasure to talk about anything but politics with Mike from Triple Z in McLaren Vale and to discuss local issues with Diane at Alex FM on the Fleurieu. All of our community radio stations are run by volunteers for their community, and they do an amazing job.

Volunteers provide innumerable hours of their valuable time and labour, and it is a contribution that I and my community greatly appreciate. I also wish to recognise the great work of the peak organisation for volunteers in South Australia, Volunteering SA&NT, and in particular its CEO, Evelyn O'Loughlin, who tirelessly advocates and supports volunteers in my home state.

Volunteering Australia estimates that the annual contribution of volunteering to our national economic and social wellbeing is $290 billion. Australia is the great place it is today because of volunteering, but I am concerned for the future. Where are the young people who will volunteer at the op shops, who will visit our elderly in the aged-care homes and who will learn the skills needed to keep community radio stations alive? The government must take steps today to ensure the valuable services provided by our volunteers survive and thrive in the years to come. That is why I'm joining Volunteering Australia's call to the Australian government to formally recognise the contribution and value of volunteering through a volunteering statement. By issuing this statement, the Australian government could show leadership to tens of thousands organisations involved in volunteering and to the one in three Australians who participate in volunteering. A volunteering statement would be the first step in a more comprehensive and strategic approach to supporting the volunteer workforce, articulating a vision and guiding government action and investment over the long term. Our communities rely on volunteering, and we must not take it for granted.

Finally, to the thousands of volunteers in Mayo, from the Country Fire Service and surf lifesaving clubs that watch over us during these hot summer months to the kindness and joy that radiates from the Community Visitor Scheme volunteers and the elderly residents they visit: I am, we are, indebted to your generosity, and may I humbly say thank you.

**Queensland Government**

**Mr LAMING (Bowman) (16:44):** Mr Speaker, if you're wondering why many of these colleagues over here sit on this side of the chamber, you don't have to go past four million Queenslanders who back in May made a pretty tough decision, which was that 23 out of 30 seats would support the coalition—you can add in Bob Katter and make that 24. To those Queenslanders, spare a moment for their suffering, because for the next 12 months they have to put up with selfies, they have to put up with the cardboard cheques of state Labor MPs,
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they have to put up with the fake and artificial press conferences and the MPs basically just trying to hold onto their jobs as that fine state, that diversified economy of Queensland, now has the highest unemployment of any state or jurisdiction in the country at 6.5 per cent—nearly two full points higher than Victoria and New South Wales. Queensland—not the biggest state by population by any means—has more long-term unemployed than any other state in Australia. Queensland has more bankruptcies than any other state in Australia and we are basically held to ransom by the incompetence of the 'Trad-iculous' Labor government.

Imagine our suffering then when we have state MPs who have got very little to do for their own electorates—no new road upgrades, no services being delivered. They have turned themselves to more important tasks. On Australia Day eve this year they decided, in my electorate of Redlands, to fundraise from their parliamentary state email account and see how much money they could make for the ALP. Out went the email with a little innocent button that said: 'Donate to Redlands, who wouldn't?' Sure enough, that money was going straight into ALP coffers using the parliamentary accounts.

When confronted by the clerk last week the state member for Redlands blamed spoofing. For those who don't know the term—I had to look it up myself—it's where, in a computer network, IP addresses are effectively spoofed through the creation of an internet protocol packet with a false source IP address for the purpose of impersonating another computing system. That is what happened to state MP Kim Richards. When you check, of course, they say, 'No, not at all.' She's admitted having two accounts—one parliamentary and the other not—and simply using the wrong account to fundraise money for the ALP. Would we be reasonable in asking that that money be refunded to those who've donated in the first place? Sending that kind of email out from a parliamentary network is absolutely breaching parliamentary protocols, here and there. But we hear nothing from the mute member for Redlands—nothing except blaming it on being spoofed.

So imagine my surprise when last Saturday I started receiving threatening messages from family members of the member for Redlands' staff—and I have forwarded those as well. Why do innuendo, homophobia and physical threats need to be sent from family members of those working in a state MPs' office? Again, we would find that completely unacceptable, but we can't get an answer why that is occurring. It is simply not good enough.

Keeping it in the family is what it is all about up there in Queensland Labor. Just next door, the walking impersonation of a political superannuation system, the member for Capalaba, decided, for some unknown reason, to set up an anonymous Gmail account for the purpose of destroying a political opponent, because that political opponent beat his staff member at the last local government election. So what do you do? You don't campaign harder, you don't deliver more for your community; you set up an anonymous Gmail account and start traducing the elected councillor for the purposes of destroying his reputation. That email was ultimately searched by Queensland Police and led to a visit to the home of the family member working for the member for Capalaba. That led to a confession and no further action being taken except me asking a very simple question: why do we want to, for heaven's sake, in a political democracy, set up fake Gmail accounts circulating information to every club, every society and every P&C in a councillor's area suggesting that that person is a predator? Is that acceptable conduct politically? Of course it's not acceptable. I don't need to lecture anyone about this. All we're asking for is a confession.
The response from the member for Capalaba has been, 'Well, the police haven't come to talk to me.' Is that where we have come to in democracy? Are those the standards by which we abide? The standard you walk past is the standard you accept. We can do much better than launch those kinds of anonymous attacks. Honestly, we respect other members of parliament and their family and staff. There's a line where you don't get involved in that kind of activity. It's useful to remember that we respect those that have joined us in this political journey. Staff should stay well out of those social media battles. Using the name of their spouse to try and conceal that account because they had a different surname—staff shouldn't be setting up that kind of conduct. Queensland can do better. Queensland Labor can do better and across the nation we will be watching the conduct of these two MPs until the day they seek re-election.

**Mining Industry**

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (16:49): The Labor Party strongly supports our coalmining industry; we always have and always will. The Libs and Nats say they do too, and I don't dispute that, but, unlike Labor, they do not support the industry's most valuable asset. That, of course, is its workforce. The question becomes: does One Nation support our coalminers?

Over the course of the last month, the *Newcastle Herald* has run a series of articles based on speeches made in the other place by Senator Malcolm Roberts from One Nation. Senator Roberts has asserted that both the miners union and I have failed in our duty to offer support, advice and protection for our local coalminers. Nothing could be further from the truth. Senator Roberts has also, under parliamentary privilege, offered a conspiracy theory—but we all know that Senator Roberts is fond of conspiracy theories. Indeed, he has asserted that the union and Coal Services, the entity behind coalmines insurance, have somehow conspired to deny injured coalminers the support they deserve. This, of course, is absolute rubbish.

Coal Services is jointly owned and operated by the union and the New South Wales Minerals Council, and is a regulator heavily regulated by the New South Wales government. Now while some might be open to the idea that a coal company might be interested in prioritising profit over people—not something I subscribe to—surely no-one would believe that the union is capable of such thinking. Of course, Coal Services and coalmines insurance should be measured not only on the support they provide injured miners but also on the reductions in accidents and lost injury time. Both provide impressive statistics. Senator Roberts also raised the matter of creeping casualisation in the coalmining industry. He's right to identify it as a problem, but we need solutions and he's not backing them.

Labor took to the last election a promise to legislate to guarantee for a same-job, same-pay regulatory framework and to address the unfairness highlighted by the Skene case in the Federal Court. We promised to insert an objective definition of 'casual' in the Fair Work Act. Senator Roberts has asserted I had failed to adequately support local coalminers who have suffered injury in our local coalmines. I reject this assertion absolutely, and my records put pay to this lie. If Senator Roberts is serious about joining me and the union in supporting our miners, he will withdraw his vote in the Senate until the Morrison government acts to turn the tide on casualisation. Rather than vote with the conservative government on almost 100 per cent of occasions, Senator Roberts and his colleagues could withdraw their vote from the government until it is prepared to address the creeping casualisation problems and all of those issues that flow with it.
Senator Roberts could mark down at least three things he could do in cooperation and partnership with the Labor Party. He could ensure that all of the benefits of union negotiated EAs go across the whole workforce. He could ensure the right to be treated as a permanent, with all of the benefits that come with it, when, for all intents and purposes, coalminers are permanent. He could ensure the ability to access the support, the benefits, the treatment and the rehabilitation available to coalminers when they are insured by coalmines insurance.

Throughout the recent New South Wales election campaign, and then again during the federal election campaign this year, Senator Canavan wandered around the Hunter Valley saying the government had a plan to fix casualisation. Indeed, he said they had legislation to fix casualisation. Well, that was partly true. He even asserted that the Labor Party was frustrating the legislation, which is absolutely not true. All that bill did was provide employees with the right to ask the employer to be considered as a permanent—to ask the employer. Well, good luck with that! The really curious thing is that six months after the election, that bill having not made its way through the Senate prior to the election, the government have not even brought that weak bill back to the parliament. I challenge them to do so. I challenge them to bring back an improved bill, one which truly addresses the casualisation problem by inserting an objective definition of what a casual is.

**Fisher Schools Debating Competition**

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (16:54): At the beginning of August I held my second annual Fisher Schools Debating Competition, kindly hosted by last year's winners, Chancellor State College, in Sippy Downs. This competition is designed to encourage our local young people to engage with the big issues facing Australia and to help develop critical-thinking skills for their futures. It was inspiring to see how passionate and engaged students on the Sunshine Coast really are and how far this year's repeat contestants have grown in confidence over the past 12 months. Seven teams from local schools competed for the opportunity to prepare the following speech for me to read out here in the House. Helping me to judge the debates were WorldChangers Global founder Jak Hardy and senior lecturer in politics and international relations at the University of the Sunshine Coast Dr Shannon Brincat. I thank them both.

The individual prize for the best researched speech was awarded to Lucy Gillespie, from Chancellor State College. Reuben Tauerner, of finalists Pacific Lutheran College, was given the award for delivering the most parliamentary performance, while his classmate Michael Hewitt was awarded the most persuasive speech. Finally, I am pleased to report that, after another very strong performance, Chancellor State College won the overall competition for a second time. The following speech was therefore written by Chancellor's team of Mia Seefeld, Lucy Gillespie, Kate Frankish and Mitchell Agnew. While I must stress that I don't necessarily endorse all of the propositions put forward in the following speech, I welcome the contribution to the debate and the passion with which it was written. It says:

When faced with a fork in the road which road do you choose? Freedom of speech is an integral part of our democracy, where people like us can have our voice heard. But this right is something we have to use carefully and respectfully.

The democracy of our nation can go down one of three roads.

We can choose to go the way of China—an authoritarian led and hostile political environment; we could go the way of the USA where powerful lobby groups define policy; or we can choose to forge our
own path, a path that speaks for all Australians, progressing us to a new level of national cohesion. We can walk to the beat of our own drum, leaving a trail of progress behind.

Freedom of speech is an important pillar in the shrine of democracy that our nation has fought so long to uphold. But this freedom of speech comes with responsibility. As teenagers we look at the protests happening at the moment with a querying eye. We have seen adults glue themselves to roads in order to convey their message—mimicking tantrum-like behaviour. They are protesting real issues but their end goal is unclear. Disrupting the lives of people who have no role in solutions seems selfish.

While we all have a role in protecting our environmental future, we have to be careful to ensure our message is reaching the right people, not negatively impacting on people who may be our allies. The way people practice their freedom of speech needs to be done carefully and respectfully and it seems at the moment, many Australians have forgotten this.

Freedom of speech, in the negative sense, is often associated with rallies, violent protests and social media rants. It doesn't have to be. As teenagers (and effective debaters) we have learned that to get what we want we need to be able to compromise and hear both sides of the story, build our arguments and confidently present the stronger case, not bully those who oppose us into action. We have to show respect.

Being respectful is something many people struggle with when we can hide behind a screen and give our unfiltered opinion. With freedom of speech comes responsibility, the responsibility to be respectful when exercising our right to give our opinion. Blaming people isn't going to get us anywhere. Shoving opinions down others' throats isn't going to move us forward.

Carefully constructed rhetoric and respectfully persuasive arguments have much more power than bullying, ranting and disrupting the lives of others.

We are at a fork in the road and what we do here is critical in shaping our nation. Let's choose to forge our own path and create a nation where freedom of speech is an important part of our democracy, used carefully and respectfully.

To the students of Chancellor State College I say congratulations, a fantastic speech. It's no wonder they won the competition, and I'm very, very proud of them.

Reid Electorate: Chinese Australian Services Society

Dr MARTIN (Reid) (16:59): I'm so fortunate to be the member for Reid, an electorate so rich in cultural diversity and people from different backgrounds. Being the member for Reid is like travelling around the world in one day; it truly is. I rise today to discuss the innovative work of the Chinese Australian Services Society in my electorate. CASS is a community based not-for-profit service that provides comprehensive care to those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, focusing in particular on people from the East Asian community. The excellent work that CASS provides in Reid cannot be understated. They offer culturally and linguistically tailored services, including residential aged care, home ageing services, disability services, vocational education and training, and childcare services. CASS has made good use of the government's Early Learning Languages Australia program and has reaped fantastic results. I am so proud of the work CASS is undertaking and I have no doubt that the unique way in which they deliver their services will have a broader and more positive effect on the community that we live in. Many people in Reid benefit from these services and we can all learn from the intergenerational approach they use to developing community connection.

House adjourned at 17:00
NOTICES

The following notice was given:

Mr Georganas: to move:

That the House:

(1) notes with great concern:
   (a) Turkey's military operation targeting Kurds in northern Syria;
   (b) Turkey's actions which are causing further destabilisation in the region, worsening the humanitarian disaster in Syria, and risk undermining progress against ISIS;
   (c) evidence that innocent civilians are being killed and injured by Turkey's military operations and forces associated with Turkey in Syria;
   (d) reports of possible war crimes being committed by forces associated with Turkey; and
   (e) reports of Turkish intentions to resettle refugees from Turkey into Northern Syria outside of UN-sponsored mechanisms;

(2) recognises that the Kurdish forces in Syria have:
   (a) been instrumental in fighting Daesh as an ally of the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh/ISIS; and
   (b) lost over 10,000 fighters in the fight against Daesh in Syria; and

(3) calls on the Government to:
   (a) urge Turkey to cease its unilateral military operations in Syria; and
   (b) support international efforts to hold Turkey to account for its actions.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Zimmerman) took the chair at 10:04.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Health Care

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (10:04): We have now seen the impact of what an election of a Liberal state government is having on the health system, particularly in the southern suburbs of Adelaide. I would like to say that it was a surprise, but we know that before the state election it was very clear that the state Liberals were out of their depth when it came to planning to invest in our health system. We're also seeing in the southern suburbs, when it comes to the federal system, out-of-pocket costs to see a GP or specialist soaring. Waiting times are blowing out, and private health insurance companies are putting up their profits rather than looking after consumers. It is disappointing that we have seen Liberals in both the state and federal governments cut millions from our public hospitals in South Australia, including from the hospitals that residents in my electorate rely on.

Slashing funding from hospitals has real consequences. We are hearing report after report of patients being stranded for hours in ambulances waiting for emergency departments to admit them. Indeed, there have been some unfortunate reports that people have died while waiting to get into emergency departments. This is a real tragedy: not only are we hearing about significant waiting when it comes to our hospital and emergency departments but we are hearing about waiting lists when it comes to elective surgery. For the people that rely on this surgery, it is not elective. Whether it is having cataract surgery or whether it's having hip surgery or knee surgery, these are the types of things that improve residents' quality of life. I've had a number of locals come to me saying that they have been waiting over two years to actually access elective surgery lists. That is just unacceptable.

In addition, what's been incredibly concerning is that people who have done the cancer bowel testing kit are waiting months and months for colonoscopies. In fact, we've had one local say that, after a positive test—so, a red flag out there—they have had to wait over a year to get a colonoscopy to actually get checked. This is a serious issue. You need to expect better, and residents expect better, from their public health system. This is putting people's lives at risk. It is time that both the state Liberal Party and the federal Liberal Party rock up with some cash, invest in our health system and actually make sure that the health system is there for everyone when they need it.

South Australia: Bushfires

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (10:07): It certainly has been a vigorous start to the fire season in Australia, and, while in South Australia we haven't suffered fires of the colossal size of those in the eastern states, we've certainly had our own touches. It started back on 11 November in Port Lincoln—sadly, in an area that has seen a number of fires over the last 15 years. That brings into question things about preparation, but two homes were lost, nine outbuildings were destroyed and about 235,000 hectares were burnt. I must say well done to the firefighters: there were 25 houses saved. It gives you some idea of the response teams and just how well they work on the ground.
Then, of course, we were faced with a horrific day on 20 November in South Australia. There were catastrophic conditions, and we had two fires on Yorke Peninsula and one at the northern end around Port Wakefield. I must say there were no lives lost in any of these fires, but there was less property loss at the two on the northern end. Certainly around Ardrossan and Port Wakefield they were brought under control within the day. I visited the site of the fire that took off from Yorketown and stood alongside the power pole where the transformer, on the water tower that feeds the Yorketown community, shot out a heap of sparks that started a fire that burnt 5,000 hectares. It burned through virtually to the coastline, and then the wind swung around to the south and sent the fires north towards Edithburgh. Once again, the volunteers did an enormous job, a wonderful job, and that coordinated manner in which we deal these situations is to be applauded.

The last official count I had was 11 homes destroyed. I actually think the figure has risen higher than that, but I haven't had a recent readout on it. Not all of them were inhabited, but I have been down there for a look and toured around with the mayor, Darren Braund, who has done a terrific job under some fairly difficult circumstances. He had to evacuate his own home, for instance. But I had a look and, while not all the homes were inhabited, I make the point that anyone who has lost their home has lost everything. For that, it doesn't matter whether there are 100 homes, 1,000 homes or two homes lost; they're all in the same boat. So I worked very hard last week to make sure the Commonwealth support mechanisms clicked in—that is, the $1,000 payments per person—and we had them activated by Friday night. It would have been better in the morning so people could have immediately got that before Centrelink closed, but those things have been put in place.

I congratulate Michelle Lensink, the state minister, who hosted a community meeting over at Yorketown on Monday. Over 200 people rolled up, so there are a lot of people interested in what they can access, what they can do and what they can do to help their neighbours. Well done to those communities.

Moreton Electorate: Aged Care

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (10:11): Acacia Ridge is a suburb in the southern part of my electorate. I know it well. When I was a kid, I used to come in from the country and spend time there with my grandad, who lived there ever since, basically, World War II, when he was a grader driver for Archerfield Airport, the big American air force base. Acacia Ridge is traditionally a blue-collar suburb surrounded by businesses and Archerfield Airport. Seven and a half thousand people live at the Ridge and, of these, about 2,000 are over the age of 50.

Like many communities, it's facing the challenges of an ageing population: the challenges in providing services to deal with some of the most vulnerable people in our community. Acacia Ridge does okay in terms of what the local community provides in the way of support services for our seniors. For example, 'belong', with Trish Cattermole at the helm, has been servicing the residents of Acacia Ridge since 1989, providing community and welfare support not only for seniors but for anyone in need. The Acacia 50 & Better group, run by Larissa and other volunteers and workers, includes programs designed to encourage exercise and interaction to increase health and prevent social isolation. Acacia Ridge Meals on Wheels, led by Margaret and her dedicated team of volunteers, offer a friendly smile and a bit of a cheery chat to anyone they deliver a meal to.
Last week I hosted a seniors morning tea, and the folks who attended confirmed that they know the Morrison government has not been kind to its senior Australians. The last time they saw a significant increase in their pension was when Kevin Rudd was their Prime Minister. Under this government, aged-care services have been neglected and wound back. We see a government committed to increasing the pension age to 70. Although the government has just announced another 10,000 home care packages, which I commend them for, that's just a drop in the ocean when you think of the 120,000 people on the waiting list. Not only is there a waiting list to get onto a package; there are also a lot of instances where people are not getting the level of package that they should be receiving.

The seniors of Acacia Ridge find it hard to access services like Centrelink and My Aged Care. Everything is online, and it's difficult to navigate and access this world if you don't have a commuter or a smartphone, as was raised at the community meeting.

I think we need to be kinder and more accommodating to this group, who in many cases could not afford to enjoy the privilege of new technology when it first came about but worked hard to ensure that their children or grandchildren wouldn't be disadvantaged. I do think we need, as a rule, to be kinder and more accommodating to this generation. These are the people who came out of tougher times like World War II, and so, if groups that do the supporting, like belong, like the 50 & Better group, like Acacia Ridge Meals On Wheels and some of the churches in the Acacia Ridge area, can get it right, surely our governments can get it right. I turn again to the government to say that, when you have a waiting list of 120,000, announcing 10,000 places is mathematically a long way short of sorting out what we need to do to protect our seniors.

Dementia

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (10:29): One of the largest public health challenges facing Australia today is dementia. Dementia is currently the leading cause of death for Australian women and the second leading cause of death overall in this country. More than 430,000 Australians have been diagnosed with dementia. Without a medical breakthrough, this figure is expected to exceed one million by 2056. The global impact of dementia report estimates that the number of people with dementia worldwide will rise to 135 million by 2050.

Last week, on Friday 22 November, the 10th Wipeout Dementia event was held at Bondi Beach in my electorate of Wentworth. Wipeout Dementia is a fundraising campaign championed by the property industry. It's sponsored by Morgans, Aoyuan International, Colliers, m3property and Winten Property Group, with in-kind support from Hurley and The Bucket List. This fundraising campaign supports The Dementia Momentum—a Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing initiative which aims to advance large-scale big data research into the prevention of dementia and to increase community awareness about dementia.

Since its launch in 2015, Wipeout Dementia has attracted extraordinary corporate support, including a number of regular senior executive surfers and generous donors. To date, Wipeout Dementia has raised over $1 million in funds and generated widespread media coverage. The ambassadors for Wipeout Dementia are Richard Grellman, the chairman of IPH Ltd and FPR Ltd and the former chairman of the Association of Surfing Professionals (International) Ltd, and the 1978 world surfing champion Wayne 'Rabbit' Bartholomew. Wipeout Dementia is held in honour of Richard's wife, Suellen, who was diagnosed with young onset Alzheimer's disease.
disease aged 61 and is now in the advanced stages of the disease, requiring full-time high-
level care, aged just 67.

Dementia is the second leading cause of death in Australia and the leading cause of death
in the United Kingdom. Without a medical breakthrough, the number of people with dementia
is expected to reach 1.1 million by 2056, nearly three times as many as today. The number of
new Australian cases of dementia is projected to increase from the current rate of 250 people
day to over 650 people per day by 2056. The global impact of dementia report estimates
that the number of people with dementia worldwide will rise to 135 million by 2050.

The key message of Wipeout Dementia is for all Australians to get active to reduce their
risk of dementia. Participants in the event are fantastic exemplars of the role of physical
activity and mental activity in middle life to improve brain health in late life. Together, these
Wipeout events have raised over $1 million in funds and generated widespread media
coverage for the Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing's initiative. Each Wipeout event has a goal
of raising $100,000 for further research into dementia. Supporting this research will help
millions of people in the future and, hopefully, alter the direction of this issue. Let me also
acknowledge Anthony Scott, my cycling buddy, who has personally been touched by
dementia and who participated in Wipeout Dementia last week.

**Infrastructure**

Ms COKER (Corangamite) (10:17): During the May election, some fanciful promises
were made by the government in the seat of Corangamite. One promise was $2 billion for a
fast train between Melbourne and Geelong. The billboard screamed 'Fast rail delivered'. Fast
rail is a great idea and is needed, but voters saw through the hollow promise the Prime
Minister made. The Commonwealth contribution to the much shorter Melbourne Airport link
is $5 billion, and the estimated total cost of that project is $10 billion to $13 billion. So it's
pretty clear that $2 billion for a much longer line isn't going to deliver terribly much. A fast
train would require a totally new corridor and a totally new line. Where is the money for that
acquisition coming from? Between Geelong and Melbourne, there are at least 30 level
crossings that would have to be removed for fast rail to be built. Unlike the Morrison
government, the Andrews' government has plenty of experience at removing level crossings.
At an average of $100 million each, there goes at least $3 billion. And, at roughly $60 million
a kilometre to build the rail line, you can add another $4 billion to the bill. The total cost is
probably nearer $12 billion. A private engineering consortium recently quoted $16 billion.
And of course this promised $2 billion is counted in the government's much-vaunted
infrastructure spend of $100 billion over 10 years.

When our opponents tell us what an amazing job they are doing on infrastructure, voters
should be aware that the totals are padded out with projects like the Geelong fast rail—
projects that will never see the light of day under this government. And, of course, federal
governments don't actually build anything. State governments build the infrastructure, and I'm
told that, in making this commitment to fast rail, there wasn't even a whisper—not a word—to
the Andrews government. The Andrews Labor government has probably been the best nation-
building government this country has ever seen, but their dance card is pretty full for the next
few years. With a $107 billion infrastructure pipeline over 10 years, Victoria has a bigger
infrastructure spend than the Commonwealth. The Morrison government knew that, if they
had consulted, the truth would have been exposed. The truth is that $2 billion wasn't even
going to get rid of the level crossings, let alone preserve the corridor, build a fast train line and put new train sets on those tracks. Like most promises made by this government, it was a con job from start to finish.

**Library For All**

**Mr SIMMONDS** (Ryan) (10:20): I rise today to speak about a global organisation which is doing incredible work and which is based in Indooroopilly in my electorate of Ryan. Library For All, as it's called, is a global team of contributors, authors, illustrators, educators and entrepreneurs with a passion for equality and knowledge sharing.

In 2010, Haiti was struck by a horribly destructive earthquake, as we all know. Library For All founder, Rebecca McDonald, and her husband were so moved by the images of suffering they saw that they packed up their life in Australia—a very brave decision—put up their hands to help and moved over there. It was on this humanitarian mission that Rebecca came up with the idea for Library For All. On her return in 2011, it was born as a free digital library, and today that library is giving children in the Pacific access to books and knowledge and, therefore, the opportunities that come with education and literacy. With access to quality educational material, including books, text books and learning resources, remaining a persistent challenge across the Pacific, their work is incredibly valued and much needed. We know that without a quality education, supported by diverse and age-appropriate books, these children in the Pacific face a lifetime of illiteracy and its consequences, like discrimination and poor health.

Last week I was joined by Alex Hawke, the member for Mitchell and Minister for International Development in the Pacific, as we visited the Library For All in the Ryan electorate. Speaking with Rebecca and her passionate team about what they have achieved in getting over 700 books into the hands of young kids was both humbling and inspiring. We spoke to the authors about the importance of their volunteering and their creating of books about subjects the kids can relate to and feel connected to. They work with local authors, who submit their books via Facebook. They then get global illustrators to illustrate the books. They also organise writers workshops with corporates who then go on to contribute books for the online library.

Recently they received a federal government grant through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to help them further the work they do. They used that funding to supplement their online library of over 700 books with kits of tablets that they have put into schools in PNG. The tablets are robust and designed to be taken between classrooms, and the kids are able to safely access the 700 books in the digital library. They're all downloaded and offline, so they are able to accesses the books safely and in an enjoyable way. This has given them incredible data about what the kids are reading and how that's helping with their literacy rates.

I'm very proud to be part of a government that can support not-for-profit organisations like Library For All. I'm very proud to stand in this place and highlight the work of these great local entrepreneurs. I would really encourage members of the House and members of the public who are watching to have a look, go online, support Library For All and, if you want to, have a go at contributing to their library.
Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (10:23): I have on many, many occasions in this place—and, indeed, in my electorate—been very critical of the record of this government on apprenticeships.

An opposition member: For good reason.

Ms BIRD: For a very good reason, as my colleague says. There's been a loss of over 140,000 apprentices since the government were first elected. Despite the government's rhetoric that this is a policy that they really care about, the outcomes are appalling. They are not delivering an increase in apprenticeship opportunities for young people or, of course, for older workers who might want to retrain. In fact, in the most recent economic update we found out that they underspent nearly a billion dollars in this space, a significant proportion of that was in the area of apprentice and trade programs. I've also spoken extensively about the importance of TAFE in this sector. I acknowledge that even today there are protests in New South Wales about more cuts to TAFE by the state Liberal government, and we've have seen the impact of that.

In this context, I want to report to the House on an important local initiative. While the government are asleep at the wheel in this space—and, I have to say, to some extent blaming young people themselves, because they keep saying that the problem is that young people just don't appreciate what a great opportunity an apprenticeship is. Well, I say that's just bunkum. Young people in my area are jumping at the opportunities for apprenticeships. The problem is that there are not enough of them available. The government needs to get into the space of investing in them.

Thank heavens some local organisations step up to the plate. Our local business chamber, the Illawarra Business Chamber, has been very proactive in the space of youth unemployment, skills programs and supporting apprenticeships, and I acknowledge its work. Apprenticeship Careers Australia, which is part of the business chamber, had an open session for two hours at the local Grill'd restaurant, and I acknowledge the management and staff there who supported this project. It was something like a speed dating session, where young people who wanted an apprenticeship or traineeship could come along and talk about their skills and experience and see if they could be matched by Apprenticeship Careers Australia to job opportunities. Jenny Hirst is the area manager. She's a really experienced and professional person in this space. All we need now for those young people is additional employers to those that are already signed up to come on board and give these young people a go. So I say to local employers: if you think you have the capacity to give a young person an opportunity through an apprenticeship or traineeship, please get straight onto Jenny and Apprenticeship Careers Australia, register and let's get moving.

Sturt Electorate: Magill Village Precinct

Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (10:26): I rise to report to the chamber on another great election commitment fulfilled by the Morrison government in my electorate of Sturt, that being the funding for the Magill Village precinct that was secured during the election campaign. Just last week I was able to join with local government representatives to launch that project and confirm that funding. For the benefit of members of the chamber who—unlike the member for Boothby, who is also from South Australia—have not been to Adelaide: largely thanks to
the fact that we don’t have the same sorts of timber trees in South Australia that other parts of the country have, in the early days of electricity some chap happily invented a way of carrying our electricity lines by getting two pieces of railway track and filling the middle with cement, which is effective but it doesn’t have the best visual aspect when you drive around the streets of Adelaide. So we have an excellent scheme in South Australia to underground our powerlines. This is going to take a very long time to do in the affordable way that we’d like to, but happily in Magill Road, for the Magill Village precinct, we’ve undertaken this project to underground the powerlines and commensurately undertake a complete relandscaping of that section of road.

That part is just commencing now, but the outcome is going to be the undergrounding of powerlines and a dramatic improvement of the visual aspect of that area. We’re also planting trees and we’re going to develop a lovely canopy and have a great outcome for the local community. It will be excellent for local businesses in the area. It’s a retail commercial precinct, but the principle is to make it into, as the name indicates, a real village for the surrounding suburbs—Kensington Gardens, Kensington Park, Magill et cetera. We’ve put in $2 million, and each of the two councils have put in $2 million. It’s a $15 million project. I’d like to fight for more of these types of projects in my electorate going forward, because I’m very much a strong supporter of planting trees and improving the local amenity for residents, not just in the Magill area but right across my electorate. Planting trees is a great practical way that we can achieve so many benefits. If we do it coupled with projects like this, we improve the local amenity and improve the support for local small businesses and make it more appealing to go and spend money locally in our economy. It’s been a great outcome. I was very pleased to have been there to confirm the Commonwealth's support for it just last week. It is going to engender a lot more of these concepts coming from local government. It is exactly the sort of thing that we should be investing in. I look forward to fighting for more of these projects into the future.

Cowan Electorate: Beechboro Primary School

Dr ALY (Cowan) (10:29): I think I speak for many of us when I say one of the greatest sources of pride for all us here are the children and the young people that we get to meet in our electorates carrying out our duties. Today I want to talk about some of the amazing young children that I met at Beechboro Primary School in my electorate of Cowan. The year 5 HASS class taught by Mr James Davies recently wrote a series of letters to me with their thoughts on ocean pollution where they also offered some solutions to their concerns. After watching videos and reading about ocean pollution, the children were concerned about what the government is doing about reducing plastic waste and increasing recycling.

One of the common themes throughout their letters was the sheer volume of plastic finding its way to the ocean and the impact this would have on sea life. Solutions that they offered included higher levels of recycling, with more recycling bins for households; replacing plastics with other materials where possible, such as glass; more clean-up days; and providing more opportunities for new technologies and new ideas that could help with recycling.

I was struck by the passion and the clarity that these children spoke with about the issues that they see as an existential threat to their lives. The children were also inspired by the fact one of the other solutions to sea pollution—a floating ocean boom which collects rubbish—was also designed by a young person. In his letter to me, Mr Davies also explained a little
more about why the class had written. He said that the children in his class believe that what they have to say is important and that if they express their concerns to an elected representative it would make a positive difference to the world and to their future.

Mr Davies also asked if I might be able to write back to the class and thank them for their letters. I can confirm that I went one better: a couple of weeks ago I spent an afternoon with the young people at Beechboro Primary School to hear more firsthand about their concerns and solutions. I could not be more proud of the young people in Beechboro. In turn, I hope to make the kids at Beechboro Primary School proud and help them see a positive difference for their future. I hope I can make a difference for Fatima, Matthew, Ethan, Diaz, Jessica, Bella, Harrison, Mason, Ashton, Matin, Kayla, January, Tyson and all the other children in year 5 HASS and all the great kids in Cowan. It was very clear from the letters that our children, who will have to face the consequences of our actions today, want to see a government that will take a tougher stance on the environment.

Mitchell Electorate: Youth Leadership Forum

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Minister for International Development and the Pacific and Assistant Defence Minister) (10:32): I want to join with the member for Cowan in endorsing our young people. It's a pleasure today to rise and speak with pride about the Mitchell Youth Leadership Forum. Established 18 years ago, the Mitchell Youth Leadership Forum is a 2½-day program for year 11 students focused on the three core values of integrity, service and courage. It's been my privilege to have been president of the forum since 2008 and to have hosted every private and public school year 11 at Vision Valley for two days since that time.

Last month, of course, from 17 to 20 October, together with our CEO Tristan Smith, we hosted 154 student leaders from 15 schools throughout the Mitchell electorate at Vision Valley. The participating schools include: Balkham Hills High, Castle Hill High, Crestwood High, Galston High, Hills Grammar, Kellyville High, Marian Catholic College, Model Farms High, Muirfield High, Northholm Grammar, Northmead High, Redeemer Baptist High, Redfield College, Tangara School for Girls and Norwest Christian College.

Thank you to these schools and the principals who've been the mainstay of the forum since its inception and have been on board for the entire 20 years. I extend my thanks to the principals and parents of today who continue their schools' involvement and support for this excellent forum. This year's students brought with them an immeasurable energy, enthusiasm and passion and growth throughout the 2½ days which was incredible. I look forward to following their success back at their schools and within our wider local community.

I'd like to thank the dedicated volunteer team, consisting of over 70 leaders and committee members, who worked tirelessly throughout the year and over the 2½ days to support these students. The passion and commitment in developing the next generation of leaders is nothing short of admirable, and the Mitchell Youth Leadership Forum would not be possible without them. These leaders are exceptional examples for the students and display the forum's values of service, integrity and courage in their daily lives.

During the forum, students participated in team-building activities, small-group discussions, and community service projects at Aminya Aged Care and McCall Gardens residential accommodation for adult men with disability. During the community service projects, the students completed a range of activities with residents, including painting,
washing residents' cars, gardening, musical performances and other important interactions. They interacted with residents, teaching them how to knit, dancing, playing snooker and lawn bowls, and assisting residents with their computers and their mobile phones.

The students also had the opportunity to listen to some inspiring and immensely important speakers that we hear from every year. We get a great line-up every year. This year was Matt Kershaw; Heather Hawkins; Ronni Khan, CEO of OzHarvest, notably; Chris Lee; and Barnaby Howarth. I want to thank those inspiring speakers and the leaders that share the personal stories and the inspiration they provide of service to our community and to our student leaders.

I’d like to thank and acknowledge our sponsors, including Nature's Sunshine Australia and Castle Towers, and all of our other local sponsors who provide for the forum. Thank you to Smiling Bakery, Castle Hill Growers Market, Allen Drew Funerals, Hills Lodge Hotel, Redeemer Baptist School, LSK Plastics and Swift Consulting for their community support for the forum.

I want to make special mention of our committee as well: Tristan Smith, our CEO; Steve Edwards; Jan Cox; Ged Lewis—all of the committee. Thank you.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 10:35 to 10:52

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

Australian Bushfires

Consideration resumed.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (10:52): In continuation from my contribution last night in relation to the bushfire tragedies, I want to start again by acknowledging the remarkable work of the RFS, all those emergency personnel and, indeed, the incredible volunteers from our area and throughout the country who have come to our region to assist at a really devastating time. We mentioned last night in the contributions that there are still areas of concern on the New South Wales North Coast that we're all keeping a close eye on.

Also, as I mentioned in my contribution last night, the Leader of the Opposition was recently on the New South Wales North Coast. We were briefed by the RFS at Casino and thank them so much—the briefing at their headquarters was very comprehensive and informative. We also had at that briefing the state member for Lismore, Janelle Saffin, and the federal member for Page. The RFS have done a remarkable job.

After that briefing at Casino, we travelled to Nimbin with the opposition leader and toured and spoke to a lot of people at the evacuation centre and heard firsthand the concerns from locals there. We also attended a local CWA. Of course, our CWA are always there to assist in any emergencies, and they've been remarkable throughout our region. Whilst we were there, they mentioned to the opposition that one of the big issues they had was they didn't have enough freezers and fridges for the amazing amount of donations they were getting from many people. The opposition leader later spoke to a member of the Woolworths board. Within hours, he was advised that the next day Woolworths would deliver to the CWA three fridges,
three freezers, a pallet of water and a $1,000 voucher. It's great to have that support on the ground to make a difference, so all of those goods that were donated were able to be housed in those freezers.

As I said in my contribution last night, it has of course been devastating—the loss of life and loss of property that we've seen with these bushfires and the impact on our wildlife, including our koalas and our precious rainforests. In our region, on the New South Wales North Coast, rainforests have burned for the first time. This is truly heartbreaking, and it has been for many of the community, when we look at the extent of the damage that there is. The fact is that the fire season is starting earlier and finishing later, and we are seeing more extreme weather events across the country. And of course, whilst we're out and about talking to locals, many people do raise that we need to be having conversations about climate change and acting on that, and I think that moving forward we do, as a country, need to seriously look at what action we need to be taking in light of the devastation we've seen, and it is time to listen to those experts and time to work together in terms of a way to tackle climate change.

I welcome the opposition leader's call to convene a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments to look at practical measures towards a new national strategy for disaster preparedness and for real action on climate change. I certainly support that. I think we need to seriously be looking at that moving forward. I also note and commend the New South Wales opposition, which has recently called on the New South Wales Auditor-General to urgently investigate whether our firefighters have the resources they need. I think it's important that we have a proper audit. Unfortunately, we know that this situation continues. The New South Wales Labor opposition is suggesting that the Auditor-General take a whole-of-government approach to the audit, considering the funding and resourcing of the Royal Fire Service and other areas, and also whether staffing levels are adequate and sustainable—what additional services, responses and measures are needed. So we need to have that auditing done as soon as possible to ensure that our firefighters, our wonderful RFS, have all the resources they need in these very difficult times. One of the things we keep hearing on the ground is that we need to have more permanent, retained firefighters on the front line to keep our communities safe into the future.

I also want to note that a number of disaster recovery grants have been in place since the fires started. They provide immediate relief to eligible primary producers, small businesses and non-profit organisations. It's also for clean-up and restoration costs in the aftermath of extreme natural disasters, and it's important to have all those measures in place for those communities.

Again, I commend all those in the RFS—the emergency personnel, all those volunteers from our local area who have come throughout the state and throughout the country. The spirit of generosity, community and resilience is truly alive and strong, and it's wonderful to see so many people assisting one another in such devastating times and such heartbreaking scenes of loss of life and property and devastation to our rainforests and our wildlife. It is a very difficult time for those throughout the communities who are battling these bushfires. We heard from the RFS that we may not have heavier rain until early next year. So it still is a very difficult time, but we stand with all those communities and commend all those people who are doing their utmost to assist.
Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (10:57): I would like to take this opportunity to send my thoughts and my very best wishes to all Australians impacted by the devastating bushfires we've seen in New South Wales, in Queensland and in areas of my home state of South Australia over recent weeks. I would particularly like to recognise all our incredible firefighters, police and other emergency service personnel for their tireless efforts not only in fighting the fires but in their work to evacuate residents and provide shelter and support for those who've lost their homes and lost their businesses. I would like to acknowledge the members for Macquarie and Richmond and my colleague the member for Page for their contributions and for what they have been doing to support their communities during these very, very difficult times.

As I said, I want to sincerely thank each and every emergency service person for everything they have done and continue to do to keep our community safe and to keep homes and business safe from bushfires and for everything they're doing to help people recover, because a lot of communities—a lot of families, a lot of individuals—are now in the recovery phase. We know that in times of crisis Australians are always at their best and they do their very best to support one another, and they do so from all over the nation.

Today I want to personally recognise and thank the members of the CFS from my electorate of Boothby—all the wonderful volunteers who have travelled to New South Wales to support the bushfire-fighting effort and also travelled within South Australia to do so. I want to personally acknowledge the following firefighters, our CFS volunteers from Boothby, who travelled to New South Wales, and probably still are travelling, to help with the effort there. From the Belair CFS, I acknowledge Greg Wood; Amelia Yaron; Senior Firefighter Luke Raymond, who I met and had a good chat to at the CFS barbecue I hosted with Sam Duluk on the weekend; James Wilson; Illora Godwin; Brendan McGannon; and Senior Firefighter Bobbie Rice. From the Blackwood CFS, I acknowledge Linton Dabinet and Jake Barber. From Cherry Gardens CFS, I acknowledge Alan Mundy, who has actually been to New South Wales twice; Lieutenant Hayden Linggood, who also has been to New South Wales twice; Sam Linggood; and Senior Firefighter Peter Tree. From Coromandel Valley CFS, I acknowledge Scott Taylor and Lieutenant Isaac Eckermann. From the Eden Hills CFS, I acknowledge Matt Alan, David Young, Luke Smet—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Proceedings suspended from 11:00 to 11:12

Ms FLINT: As I was acknowledging, from the Eden Hills CFS we also had Matthew Rex, who has been twice to help out the bushfire effort in New South Wales. I would also like to recognise the following members of my local CFS brigades who provided assistance with the fires on the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia recently—and the member for Grey made a contribution in this place this morning noting how serious the situation was on the Yorke Peninsula for those who live in Yorketown, Edithburgh and surrounding farming districts. There were 5,000 hectares burnt out, and 11-plus homes and many other buildings were lost. I want to pass on my sincere thanks to the following CFS volunteers who made the trek across to the Yorke Peninsula, in very serious weather conditions for us in the seat of Boothby at the time. It was very good of them to head across to help those who were desperately in need.

From the Coromandel Valley CFS, we had Lieutenant Ian Mitchell, Senior Firefighter Isaac Eckermann, Janita Bentley, Sammy French, Greg Whittaker, Chris Andrews and John
Simpson Smith. From the Belair CFS, we had Chris Langley, Amy Harris, Amelia Yaron and Adam Basedow. From the Blackwood CFS, we had Jhye Moroney, Julian Butler, Nick O'Donohue and David Russell. From the Cherry Gardens CFS, we had Andrew Desteno, Rob Ellis, Lawrie Linggood, Craig Cram, Kayla Anthony, Sam Linggood, Wayne Stainer, Barry Sheppard, Geoff Newblack and Alan Julian. From the Eden Hills CFS, we had Lieutenant Tom Campbell, Neil Board, Tahlia Lockwood, Victoria McCluskey, William Flynn and Neil Gloyn all head across to the Yorke Peninsula to help out those in very desperate need during those very serious fires.

I also want to acknowledge the CFS coordinators, who managed the absence of these volunteers from our area. It was quite a logistical effort and challenge because we did, of course, have catastrophic bushfire conditions in the seat of Boothby and surrounding areas on 20 November. So my sincere thanks go to Dale Thompson and everyone else who helped to manage sending those volunteers across to help those in desperate need whilst also making sure our local area was protected.

And so, whilst we were lucky not to be personally impacted on 20 November, it was a really good reminder of the danger that the bushfire season brings. Last week we had particularly hot and windy conditions which did result in the catastrophic fire danger declaration in the Mitcham Hills area and in suburbs including Blackwood, Belair, Glenalta, Eden Hills and Bellevue Heights. We were very lucky this time, but, with a hot summer ahead, I urge every single resident living in those areas and those suburbs not to be complacent. We know that people love to live in the Mitcham Hills, the foothills and the Adelaide Hills because of the beautiful bushland, the native vegetation, the gorgeous gum trees, but we know that this brings with it a very high bushfire risk. So I'm urging everyone in my community and everyone around Australia who lives in a bushfire-prone area to please ensure that you have your bushfire action plan in place now. As the CFS says in South Australia: Prepare. Act. Survive. Please get your bushfire plan in place now.

I want to thank sincerely the Sturt CFS Group for their continuing work and the support they give to the brigades at Blackwood, Belair, Eden Hills, Coromandel Valley and Cherry Gardens and who keep the residents in Boothby and surrounding areas safe each summer. I want to acknowledge the incredible hard work of the head of each brigade—Mark Brookes at Belair, Jamie Emswiler at Blackwood, Ben Gloyn at Eden Hills, Rohan Clarke at Coromandel Valley and Lawrie Linggood at Cherry Gardens—as well as every single one of their dedicated volunteers.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 11:17 to 11:28

Ms FLINT: What some members of my community—and, in fact, people around Australia—might not realise is that the CFS don't just help us during bushfires. They also respond to a range of emergency situations from vehicle accidents to hazardous substance spills and other emergencies throughout the year. So I want to thank them again most sincerely for everything they do for my community throughout the year. And, of course, as we head into bushfire season, they play a critical role in helping to spread the message about bushfire safety, including how to prepare homes and properties and what to do in the event of a fire.
I am so grateful to all of my local CFS brigades for always welcoming me very warmly and taking the time to take me through the brigade, explain all of the different equipment to me and demonstrate what they do in terms of their training to prepare for bushfire situations. I recently visited the Belair CFS and I'm most grateful to Captain Mark Brooks and team members Ilora Godwin, Stuart Freckelton, Jack Adcock and Ian Hage for showing me around and having a chat to me about the bushfire season ahead. All of their efforts require significant time and equipment, and not just during emergency situations. Every Friday night these wonderful volunteers go through their training drills, update their skills and make sure they are ready to protect and assist our community.

On behalf of everyone in my local community, I'd like to say a huge thank you in particular to the Sturt group coordinators—Sturt group officer, Dale Thompson and deputy group captains David Sims and Chris Smith—for what they do to help coordinate the entire group. To show our support in our small way for the Sturt CFS group, my state colleague the member for Waitena, Sam Duluk, and I hosted our annual CFS fundraising barbecue on Saturday 23 November. We raised a good amount of money for the Sturt CFS and I just want to thank all of our local residents who were so generous with their donations. I know we had a lot of young community members who were really excited to see the fire truck there and to be able to talk to the volunteers about what the fire trucks do.

The bushfire events of the past few weeks do serve as an important reminder to everyone in our community just how fast a fire can spread and the devastating damage that it can cause. I again urge everyone in my area to do what the CFS ask you to do: prepare, act, survive.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas): Before I call the member for Solomon, I would like to associate myself with the words of my fellow South Australian the member for Boothby and congratulate all the South Australian CFS workers for the great work that they do.

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (11:31): I add my appreciation and acknowledgement of all those firefighters and others who have been putting themselves out there—and, often, in danger—to put out these dreadful fires—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 11:32 to 11:49

Mr GOSLING: I rise to express my heartfelt condolences to all Australians across New South Wales, Queensland and the rest of the country who have recently had their loved ones, homes, animals, crops and livelihoods taken by devastating bushfires. The figures alone are a disturbing reminder of what Australians have had to contend with in recent weeks and months. As of Saturday, the New South Wales bushfires had claimed six lives, destroyed over 600 homes and scorched an area of land about the size of Sydney. In Queensland, 20 homes were lost and about 180,000 hectares burnt. In Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, dozens of other dangerous fires caused significant injuries and damaged properties. As of last week, the estimated total of the damages from the terrible fires across New South Wales and Queensland had reached $145 million. The long-term cost to the local, regional and national economies is still incalculable. The cost to the children, spouses, families and friends of those whom we lost to these fires is of course beyond words.
As a House, as parliamentarians and as leaders, we keep the victims of these fires and their loved ones in our hearts. As a community, let's ensure we show ongoing care and support to those who will bear the mental and emotional scars of these traumatic hours and days long after the victims' physical wounds have healed over. When the trees have regrown and the houses have been rebuilt around the sites of these tragedies, we must remember. We not only owe those most affected by these tragedies our thoughts and prayers; we owe them urgent national and bipartisan leadership to ensure that our professional and world-class emergency services have even greater resources at their disposal and a national strategic plan in support of their efforts next time such disasters strike, as, unfortunately, they are sure to. Unless

I want to acknowledge New South Wales Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Acting Commissioner Mike Wassing and their counterparts from across the country. In the worst hours of their lives, Australians across our states and territories trusted in these leaders of real character, integrity and professionalism for literally life-saving help. We all can learn from the exemplary service they have shown. Thousands of Australians owe them a huge debt of gratitude, and many Australians obviously owe them their very lives. We, as elected representatives of these devastated regions and electorates, owe them an enormous debt of gratitude for their professionalism, integrity and loyal service in the face of immense danger to the personal safety and even the lives of their brave men and women.

I'd especially like to highlight the debt of gratitude we all owe the thousands of incredible fireys and emergency service volunteers from across the country who fought the flames and showed incredible determination and selflessness to save their fellow Australians' lives, properties and livestock. I'm immensely proud of volunteer Territorians who did just that, such as Rob, a local Rotary NT Firey of the Year, who came down to help the Queenslanders fight their fires. I pay tribute to Rob's family too. I pay tribute to all firefighters, whether they're volunteers or career firefighters. It's a very difficult job, and I know that well—my brother is a firefighter up in Darwin. Their job is very difficult indeed. I want to pay tribute to other interstate fire and emergency crews, including those from Tassie who helped in Queensland and New South Wales. I also want to acknowledge Team Rubicon Australia, 'the greyshirts', who are working in country towns as we speak.

The ADF, of course, are always there to assist, and they were able, around their operational requirements, to provide a lot of support to firefighting efforts—regular soldiers, sailors and airmen and reservists alike. The Air Force transported fireys from interstate. The Army engineers, with their dozers, did great jobs in clearing firebreaks. In aviation, the helicopters were up in the air spotting fires. There was also great work done by 7th Brigade in Brisbane, for example. Their Emergency Support Force was out searching for missing persons.

Tragedy can and does bring out the best as well as the worst in us humans, but in this case, with these fires, we've seen some of the best of what human solidarity, compassion and cooperation can achieve. This should give us hope and remind us that some policy areas are just too big and the consequences of potential mistakes too disastrous to just resort to digging into our partisan trenches. I think disaster management is one such policy area. It's in such a bipartisan spirit that Labor has approached these bushfires, recognising the primary task at hand is to ensure lives and properties are kept safe.
Labor stands ready to support this effort. In the Leader of the Opposition's letter to the PM, the member for Grayndler put forward Labor's constructive proposal that an urgent meeting of the Council of Australian Governments seek to firm up Australia's natural disaster preparedness by specifically addressing the following: steps towards a new national strategy for disaster preparedness, ensuring emergency services—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Proceedings suspended from 11:55 to 12:06

Mr Gosling: In continuation, what I've been keen to do today is to talk about the destruction the bushfires have brought to areas of our country and to thank all the respondents, from the police commissioners and the volunteer fireys to all of those who have supported them from around the country—and even New Zealand; we've had our brothers and sisters from across the Tasman helping out—including the Australian Defence Force and volunteer organisations like Team Rubicon Australia. I've also reinforced that disaster management and preparedness is a policy area that demands bipartisanship and that Labor stands ready to work constructively with the government on this.

There are some things that we need in our national strategy for disaster preparedness. We obviously need to make sure that our services are adequately funded, both at a state and a federal level. I think we need to expand the capacity of Australia's National Aerial Firefighting Centre and provide it with appropriate funding. Gone are the days when Elvis comes over for a season and, 'She'll be right.' We need to seriously increase our aerial firefighting ability. As I said earlier, it's been great that Army Aviation have been able to help out with their helicopters in doing that fire-spotting work. We need to continue to invest and probably increase our investment in research on national disaster response, recovery and mitigation. We need to look at measures required to attract, retain and appropriately reward volunteers, because we've seen with these fires how incredibly important they are, but we also need businesses to be enabled to support their staff who choose to volunteer, in very much the same way that businesses who have Army or ADF reservists working for them are supported.

We need to develop an action plan around climate adaptation—I don't think anyone who's serious about this issue would deny that—and bring forward disaster mitigation funding in recognition of the immediate dangers and impending disaster this season. We are not yet into December and we have had these horrific fires. I, with others, call on this House to work on a bipartisan basis to enhance our capacity to coordinate and respond to future disasters and urge that we keep in mind those who have suffered through this month's fires. Importantly, let's channel our collective pain into acting to ensure that this experience makes us even better prepared for the worst to come.

Ms Landry (Capricornia—Assistant Minister for Children and Families) (12:10): The recent bushfires in Yeppoon have devastated the community and are some of the worst natural disasters the area has seen in recent memory. On the afternoon of Saturday 9 November fire broke out on Old Byfield Road in Cobraball. In a matter of hours the fire spread quickly and immediately threatened lives and properties. I live in Yeppoon and I can remember vividly the smoke haze that fell onto the area. Evacuations were called in the evening and continued throughout the night and well into the next day. Overall, evacuations continued for over 48 hours.
The fire frontage totalled 17 kilometres by 13 kilometres—a truly massive and terrifying wall of fire. After the flames subsided enough to survey the damage, 15 homes and 56 structures were destroyed and approximately 12,000 hectares were affected or destroyed, including 8,500 hectares of grazing land. Some 19 localities in the Livingstone Shire Council were affected by the bushfire, including Barmarree, Bungundarra, Cobraball, Adelaide Park, Farnborough, Inverness, Lake Mary and Woodbury. Twenty-seven structures and eight houses were severely to moderately damaged, along with 243 operations or businesses impacted within the immediate fire-damaged area. Around 274 hectares of horticulture and tropical fruit production were also lost to the flames, including the crops on Robert and Jocelyn Sikes' farm and Jack and Rae Cowie's farm. It's been amazing how the community have got behind our farmers and the people who have lost property and had major damage to the farms. Groups like Rotary have been out there helping cut down trees. It's been very impressive.

The area is no stranger to bushfires. We have seen five bushfire disasters in three years, including the Byfield and Shoalwater Bay fires in 2017, the Caves fire in 2018 and the Byfield fire in 2019. I hosted the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack, and the minister for emergency management, the member for Maranoa, David Littleproud, at Yeppoon last week to visit the farms. Both the Sikes family and the Cowie family estimate that the financial loss to their farms could be in the hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of dollars. We witnessed the damage firsthand—damage that could have been minimised if the Queensland government had lifted restrictions to allow the farmers and the property owners to burn back adequately and safely.

Despite the damage the bushfire left behind, the stories of kindness and consideration that the community has shown one another are truly inspiring. Total strangers offered as much help as they could in the moment. This ranged from an extra pair of hands to fend off the flames near a home or a small and reassuring gesture like offering a cuppa and a friendly ear to listen. It is a testament to the community that we have in Yeppoon, and it's a community that I am very proud to be part of.

I want to thank and commend all the emergency personnel who fought the flames, often without sleep and without a break for days, and the local businesses and the farmers who stood side by side with the fireys. You saved lives, you saved properties and you saved homes. The community is in your debt, and we thank you for your sacrifice to keep people and properties safe.

While one of the worst bushfires the area has seen is now over, we still have a long road ahead with recovery efforts and the rebuilding of homes and properties. I'm happy to say that the Australian government has made available financial assistance to people affected by the bushfires in Livingstone Shire. Assistance has been provided through the activation of the Australian government Disaster Recovery Payment and the Disaster Recovery Allowance.

The Australian government Disaster Recovery Payment is a one-off non-means-tested payment of $1,000 for eligible adults and $400 for eligible children who have been adversely affected by the bushfires. The Disaster Recovery Allowance is also being made available to provide a short-term support payment to assist those who have lost their income as a direct result of the bushfires, which is income assistance for up to 13 weeks, equivalent to the maximum rate of Newstart allowance or youth allowance. The extension of the AGDRP and
the DRA is over and above the support already being provided through the jointly funded Commonwealth state Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. Both payments have been available since 13 November, and I encourage anyone who has been adversely affected to call the Department of Human Services and ask about their eligibility for assistance.

I am very disappointed that the Queensland government has rejected calls for a parliamentary inquiry into these bushfires. The member for Keppel, who's electorate encompasses Yeppoon, said that Queensland doesn't want politicians running an inquiry into bushfires. I think a lot of property owners and farmers in Yeppoon would disagree with that. Conducting important inquiries, such as this one into these devastating bushfires, is exactly why they are elected.

Nearly all of the property owners who I have spoken to have said that land clearing restrictions in place have made fires worse. Even when they have applied for special considerations to back-burn adequately and to do hazard reduction burns, they wait months and months for a response. The IGEM report, released earlier this year, said the Queensland government must reassess its native vegetation legislation. The Queensland government owes a parliamentary review to the farmers, the property owners and the volunteer firefighters who battled the blazes on the ground. While we cannot totally eliminate all of the risks presented by bushfires, considered and responsible steps need to be made to ensure our farmers, Queensland's true conservationists, can adequately burn back the areas that could potentially destroy their homes or properties if left unattended.

**MOTIONS**

**National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House commemorate the anniversary of the national apology to the survivors and victims of institutional child sexual abuse.

**Dr ALLEN** (Higgins) (12:16): I rise to support this motion in this House to commemorate the first anniversary of the National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse. To the survivors: I am sorry this happened to you and I am sorry that you weren't heard. In your homes, in the streets, in your communities, in your schools and in your churches there were people you tried to tell. You tried to reach out to those who should have listened and protected you. I'm sorry that often you weren't believed, that society didn't trust the word of you as a child.

On 22 October last year, the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, delivered the National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse. The Prime Minister referred to the abusers as:

… enemies that all too often cloak their evil in roles where they should be trusted more than any: teachers, priests, pastors, coaches, counsellors, just to name a few.

A staggering number, 60,000 people, are estimated to have experienced sexual abuse as children in Australian institutions. Tragically, there was failure at every level of Australian society. Those who told their stories should know that they have had a profound effect on attitudes to child abuse in this country and on holding the nation to account.

While preparing to speak on this motion, I went to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse website. Right there on the screen were dozens of people's
stories—heartbreaking, saddening stories of young and sometimes vulnerable children who fell prey to these enemies. There was page after page of these brave and now grown men and women who willingly shared their stories so that we as a government and we as a society could better understand the crimes of the past, learn from these mistakes and work out how to protect children of the future.

There was a story of Whitney, who is visually impaired, who was told to strip bare while a doctor, a photographer and another man took photographs of her. She was uncomfortable at the time, but she and her mother trusted the doctor. There are so many good doctors in the world, and it really saddens me, as a doctor myself, that this happened. She told the commission:

… that was also symptomatic of that day and age where people thought doctors were like God, you know, they just trusted them totally.

Then there is the story of Duncan, whose abuse was so traumatic that he blocked it out until a car accident many years later triggered flashbacks to his time with the Church of England Boys Society and the ongoing sexual abuse he experienced. Duncan suspects that there were adults who knew about the abuse. He said: 'They probably didn't know the way to go about it, where to bring it up. I mean, you can't go much higher than the bloke who's actually running the show.' And there is Virginia, who, after experiencing sexual and physical abuse right into her adult life, was subjected to adjournment after adjournment during the court case to bring her abusers to justice. When she finally took to the stand, where her abuser was allowed to sit directly in front of her, 'His lawyer ripped me to shreds on the stand,' she said.

These stories are a tragedy of injustice. And I have a personal story. A dear friend of mine once confided in me about the abuse he suffered while at boarding school in England. It wasn't until many decades later, during a school reunion, that he realised how systemic the abuse was. The tragedy for my friend—and it's true for all these stories—was that, while the physical torment is one thing, the big issue is that it goes to the heart of what every child deserves, and that is a trusting and respectful relationship with those who were supposed to look after them. These are stories of broken trust. And once trust is broken it sometimes can never be repaired, and that is the pain and suffering that these people carry with them for the rest of their life. It's a tragedy that should never happen. As a mother, a paediatrician and now a member of parliament in this place, I find it tragic that there was nowhere for these people to go.

An apology is empty without action, and I'm proud that by implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse we are righting the wrongs of the past. We as a parliament and as a society are taking steps to right the wrongs of the past. There were 409 recommendations from the royal commission; 84 of those recommendations have been addressed through the National Redress Scheme. This scheme was designed to assist those who experienced institutional child sexual abuse. The National Redress Scheme will run for 10 years and work closely with those affected to provide counselling and psychological services; a redress payment, if necessary; and/or a direct personal response, such as an apology from the responsible institution. This scheme can never reverse the devastating acts that have been committed against children or
lessen the pain of past wrongdoings, but this scheme will seek to provide support and acknowledge survivors.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Proceedings suspended from 12:23 to 12:33

Dr ALLEN: Fifty-six institutions have joined the scheme to date, including the Commonwealth government, state and territory governments and 47 non-government institutions. The non-government institutions include institutions run by the Catholic Church, Catholic religious orders, Anglican church institutions, Baptist churches, the Uniting Church, the YMCA, the Salvation Army and state and territory members of Scouts Australia. As a result there are more than 40,000 government and non-government entities covered by the National Redress Scheme. More than 600 payments have been made, totalling more than $50 million, with an average redress payment of $80,000.

The Morrison government hasn't just 'set and forget' when it comes to the National Redress Scheme. We are continuing to improve on the scheme, identifying areas we can do better in and continue to invest in. One year on, we have invested a further $11.7 million in the scheme to improve operations, better manage applications and reduce the number of times a person who is a survivor has to retell their story. It is so devastating for people when they have to tell it over and over again. We are supporting those who most need it by increasing services to remote and regional areas, providing support to male survivors, survivors with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors. And we are ensuring this will never happen again, because, as we all know, prevention is always better than cure. We are working to introduce a National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse. The strategy will include education and awareness-raising for all sections of society so that we know that we are looking for, so that tragedies can't and won't happen again. We are improving information-sharing, data and research. We are tightening the loopholes on working with children checks and ensuring states speak to one another, bringing all criteria requirements in line and standardising them nationally.

We've entered a new world of technology and, with it, come new threats, threats that can be harder to see, and governments must respond to that. We must safeguard our children from becoming targets of online child sex abuse. The Morrison government is finalising the Online Safety Charter. This charter sets out expectations for individuals, social media networks, content hosts and other tech companies. It sends a clear message that our children are protected and we are not content for a faceless user on the other side of a computer screen to threaten our children's safety. It sends a message that those businesses must protect our children and follow strict processes just like businesses in the physical world.

There is a lot to do in the next 10 years of the National Redress Scheme, but we can't afford not to do it. It's not going to be easy, most of all for those survivors who participate in the scheme. One year on, there are still institutions who will not join the National Redress Scheme. By not joining the scheme, these institutions are increasing pain. By not joining, they are doubling down on the hurt. By thinking you are protecting yourselves, you are only exposing the victims to more pain and hurt than they've already experienced. So, in closing, I urge those institutions to join. Join us in righting the wrongs of the past. It is the right thing and the honourable thing to do.
Debate adjourned.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (12:37): I move:
That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

**Franklin Electorate: Aged Care**

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (12:37): I'd like to talk about a constituent of mine, Mr George Howard. George is 85 years old. He's a very proud Tasmanian who's worked all of his life. He has a house and a garden that he truly loves in the suburb of Risdon Vale. He first contacted my office on 6 November about his level 2 home-care package. He is a keen gardener and, despite his and his son's best efforts to make things safe for him in the garden, he is unable to access his garden now because of mobility issues. Given he can't access his garden and he's now confined to the inside of his home, he's extremely sad about the current situation. Mr Howard approached the service provider of his aged-care package to undertake some minimal home modifications—a bit of ramping and some handrails—but was told he couldn't access these alterations because of the level of package that he's on.

My office contacted My Aged Care on Mr Howard's behalf and, through the process, he was contacted for an ACAT assessment to take place. He then received a phone call to say that the assessment would take three months—just for a reassessment. This was a bit of shock to Mr Howard, that his reassessment would take such a long period of time. I went out and spoke to Mr Howard and had a visit with him in his home. He very proudly showed me his lovely home and garden and what he'd been able to do. But he also showed me the difficulties he had walking up and down his steep driveway and the steps he had to manoeuvre up and down to get to his beloved backyard. He admitted he'd had multiple falls in that garden. He also revealed that he receives much help from his family, friends and neighbours. His very kind neighbour makes his bed for him most days and helps him to take the washing off the line—it is located down the back of the yard, which he can't access. He contacted my office again this week to say that he has now had an assessment and he has been approved for a level 3 package, which is great news—except, of course, like the 120,000 older Australians who are waiting for their approved home care packages, he is not sure exactly when he is going to receive the assistance he needs. We know that the average wait time for a higher level package, such as his level 3 package, is around 22 months. I hope that Mr Howard, being 85 and having mobility issues and having to go into hospital soon for quite a big operation, doesn't have to wait quite that long.

In regard to the home modifications Mr Howard has requested—which are ramps to his backyard—these were not approved. However, some work is going to be undertaken to his driveway and his front porch so that it will be easy for him to move around the front of his much-loved home. This has been a very stressful and emotional situation for Mr Howard. I was very glad to have the opportunity personally to meet with him and talk about it, but his emotions were on his sleeve. He was really, really distressed about what has been happening to him. He is really distressed that he has to fight to get the things that should be easy and that he is entitled to.

When you hear Mr Howard's story you can see just how important it is that we respond properly to the royal commission's interim report. You can see why we on this side of the
House are so concerned about what is happening to aged care in this country. Even with the announcement earlier this week—which I spoke about in this place yesterday—of 10,000 home care packages, with just 5,500 coming up in December, Mr Howard is not going to get his home care package any time soon. He is not going to get the level 3 package any sooner after the government's announcement.

Quite frankly, it is cruel for the government to try to pretend that it is doing a lot to assist people like Mr Howard. When he hears announcements like that he actually thinks that he might get his package sooner, but he is not going to. It is cruel for the government to perpetuate this myth that it somehow is doing something. Even if some people on the home care package waitlist get their packages, there are still 110,000 waiting—110,000 older Australians! I asked the minister yesterday, and the Prime Minister earlier in the week, what their plan is to fix this. What is their long-term vision to deal with the waiting list? It blew out from 88,000 to 120,000 on this government's watch. The royal commission said it was neglect. The government can and should do better when it comes to funding the essential services that it is solely responsible for. I hate picking up the phone and talking to people who have issues around home care packages, but I will continue to do it every day and fight for them.

Infrastructure

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (12:43): People might often wonder why it is that this government is so determined have a strong economy. One of the reasons is that it delivers vitally important infrastructure to those people who need it most. Last week, there was an announcement of $1.9 billion for infrastructure in Queensland. I can't tell you how impressed I was with the ongoing commitment of this government and its senior ministers to my part of the world. I'm delighted, too, that the member for Wide Bay, whose electorate is just north of the electorate of Fairfax, is here in the chamber. We now have $3.2 billion allocated to the Bruce Highway between Brisbane and the Wide Bay electorate. It is an extraordinary amount of money. Last week we saw the bringing forward of $113.5 million into the forward estimates to continue work on the Bruce Highway, in particular between Caloundra Road and Pine Rivers. This is all about ensuring that the Bruce Highway has additional lanes so that people can get into their car in Brisbane and drive to the Sunshine Coast on six lanes—three lanes each way. This is possible only through the strong economy that we have and the continued delivery of funding. The bringing forward of that money is vitally important.

So, too, is the bringing forward of $90 million for the Beerburrum to Nambour rail project. This rail line has been in need of an upgrade. In particular there will be a duplication between Beerburrum and Landsborough. That will separate passenger rail from freight rail. It will make passenger trips more frequent and slightly faster. It will double the capacity of freight, which for such a strong trading region is very important. We also know that it was thanks to a concessional loan of $181 million that the Sunshine Coast international airport is now being built. That is now well underway.

Have we delivered on the planes? Yes. Have we delivered on the lanes? Yes. Have we delivered on the trains? Yes. We are doing that because we have a strong economy. We are doing that because we are committed. And we will continue to deliver.

Just next year we will see the international airport open on the Sunshine Coast. How good is that? Just next year we will see the opening of the Bruce Highway—six lanes between
Caloundra Road and the Sunshine Motorway. How good is that? It was 80 per cent funded by the federal government. Next year we should see the Beerburrum to Nambour works begin. Next year we will see a $241 million set of works on the Bruce Highway, Maroochydore Road and Mons Road begin construction. In other words, this isn't just about ticking the box and moving on; this is about continued investment. I can assure you, Deputy Speaker, that I, along with my colleagues the member for Wide Bay, the member for Fisher, and, indeed, the member for Longman now, will be working as a united force, as we always have, to make sure that we continue to deliver.

We have to remember, when we talk about lanes and trains and planes, that it's not just about infrastructure; it's about people's lives and livelihoods. This is about the people who are able to put food on the table at night because they've got a job, not just through the construction of these pieces of infrastructure but through the ongoing economy that comes from it. This is about giving people careers and opportunities. It's about building regions of Australia and, in particular, our region of the Sunny Coast. It's about making sure people don't die on our roads. Again, I pay tribute to the member for Wide Bay for the work he does on road safety.

This is what it's all about. It's about keeping people alive. It's about keeping people safe. It's about making sure that those of us, including those opposite, who have a love of family, can spend more time with their families. That's why we do this. That's why we're in this House. That's why an economy is so important. That's why I'm so proud to be part of this coalition government.

**Dobell Electorate**

Ms McBRIDE (Dobell) (12:48): As we look forward to Christmas with family and friends, we can look back over a year of milestones on the Central Coast, starting with Blue Haven Public School's 20th anniversary. Blue Haven has had an outstanding year, having been named Primary School of the Year, Government, and with Principal Paul McDermott having been named Primary Principal of the Year, Government. Just last week Blue Haven was recognised for innovation by *The Educator Australia* magazine.

Wadalba Community School also celebrated its 20th anniversary. I was pleased to join Principal Jason McGrath and his staff, students and families to mark the occasion at the Wyong Art House. A highlight was the special presentation to Maryann Smith for 20 years of service to Wadalba Community School and for 61 years with the New South Wales Department of Education.

In September I supported the 50th anniversary of Wyoming Public School, with funding towards a commemorative path, recognising school families and showcasing the original school bell, which was tracked down by the P&C President Kate Dwyer on Facebook. Wyoming Public School opened its doors in 1969, the year of the moon landing. The school crest features the lunar landing, and celebrations had a lunar theme, with an astronaut arriving by fire truck.

Both Jilliby Public School and the old Wyong Primary School celebrated their 130th anniversaries. Jilliby Public School was opened in 1889 by William Baldwin, who planted the bunya pine which features on the school's emblem today. Principal Natalie MacDonald said the school had come a long way from a one-room schoolhouse with a fireplace!
My home town, Wyong, was officially founded in 1888, and the old Wyong Primary School opened its doors the very next year. My grandmother Molly attended Wyong Primary School, in the heart of the town, at the top of her street. It's now home to the Wyong Neighbourhood Centre, which marked its 40th birthday this year. The Wyong Neighbourhood Centre is one of the longest-running on the coast, and I was pleased to help president Dawn Hooper with funding towards the fit-out of a new building.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Proceedings suspended from 12:50 to 13:08

Ms McBRIDE: October marked 100 years of the Wyong Tennis Club, and Mavis 'Tiny' Bailey, who is almost 100, along with junior player Teesha Davies, cut the birthday cake. Wyong High School turned 75 this year, making it the second oldest school on the Central Coast. I was pleased to attend the open day, which brought together the whole of the community, and I look forward to seeing the commemorative path marking this anniversary. I know that Principal Rod Hill and P&C President Vanessa Pickles were very proud of the student community's efforts.

The Lions Club of Wyong celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. Congratulations, President Colin Slack, Secretary Marilyn Kinealy and all local Lions. The club has just donated $2,200 for a special chair for a Tacoma Public School student, and its Christmas cakes will soon be available at the Wyong Community Bank Branch of Bendigo Bank and Bunnings.

Yesterday marked 60 years of the Entrance Camera Club, which was formed in 1959 and is affiliated with the New South Wales Federation of Camera Clubs. I attended their recent exhibition to celebrate the milestone. The club has award-winning photographers in its ranks and won first place in the Australian Photographic Society cup in 2019. If you'd like to view their work, the club has two finalists in the 2019 Australian Geographic nature competition currently on exhibition at Sydney's Maritime Museum. I met founding member, Mr Ted Baker, who is 89 and still active in the club. The club welcomes new members and meets on the second Friday evening of each month.

I was sorry I couldn't attend the celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the Salvation Army's Oasis Centre in Wyong last night. The service originally opened to support local young people and, over time, has expanded to boost and support the whole of the community. The cafe and food bank provide opportunities for locals looking to get a foot in the door, with training provided by their dedicated volunteers.

Finally, this Saturday, I'm looking forward to attending the golden jubilee celebrations and dedication of St Mary's Catholic Church in Toukley.

Congratulations to Blue Haven Public School, Wyoming Public School, the old Wyong Primary School, Wyong Neighbourhood Centre, Wyong Tennis Club, Wyong High School, Lions Club of Wyong, the Entrance Camera Club, Oasis Centre and St Mary's in Toukley.

It's wonderful to join celebrations across the year and to recognise the important contributions of so many dedicated school communities, sporting and service clubs and volunteer organisations across the Central Coast. I look forward to celebrating many more local milestones in 2020.

Question agreed to.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
Federation Chamber adjourned at 13:10
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Climate Change
(Question No. 215)

Ms Sharkie asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 16 October 2019:

Further to the answer to question in writing No. 81 (House Hansard, 14 October 2019, page 193), what impact is climate change expected to have upon public health (by disability adjusted life year) in each state and territory under the scenarios described in question in writing No. 81.

Mr Hunt: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Information is not available on the specific impact of climate change upon public health by disability adjusted life year.

The Australian Government is focused on delivering a sustainable and flexible health system, capable of responding to a range of pressures (including climate related) on the health of the population and the health system.

The Department of Health actively consults across government and with the states and territories to ensure that Australia's capacity to respond to the health impacts of climate change are appropriate and effective.

Department of the Environment and Energy: Tender Process
(Question No. 224)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 17 October 2019:

In respect of Contract Notice CN3630758 published on Austender on 27 September 2019 by the Department of the Environment and Energy:
(1) What producer and videographer services are being provided by Screencraft Media Pty Ltd under this contract.
(2) Is Screencraft Media Pty Ltd contributing to the production of graphic, video, online or other information materials or content for the department; if so, what are these materials or content.

Ms Ley: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Department procured the services of a producer and videographer/photographer through Screencraft Media. The contractors meet the Department's ongoing videography and photography needs, including production of materials for use on social media, the Departmental website, in publications (including electronic) and communications products as part of routine business.

Questions Without Notice: Additional Responses

Claressa Surtees
Clerk of the House of Representatives
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600
Dear Clerk

Further to my letter to the Speaker of the House tabled in Parliament yesterday, I am writing to inform you that in Question Time yesterday I provided the following response to a question from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr MORRISON: The Leader of the Opposition is seeking to prosecute a case here that says that if media have reported that a matter is under investigation by a law enforcement body then the standard
should be that that person should stand aside. That's what the Leader of the Opposition is prosecuting in this case.

If that's the case, why is it that for former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and I refer to March 2013—Ross Mitchell, a detective in Victoria Police's fraud squad, stated that Prime Minister Julia Gillard was under investigation over her role in the creation of an AWU slush fund. He said:

... let me make this perfectly clear. The Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard, is under investigation by police. This is fact.

Mr Brian Mitchell interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: He said:

I hadn't planned to add to what I said yesterday out of respect for the detectives on the case. But if the Prime Minister's office wants to deny she's being investigated, as has been reported last night and today, then I will once again correct that record.

Now, the then Prime Minister obviously didn't stand aside in relation to those matters. I remember the press conference—

My answer incorrectly attributed that statement to the Detective investigating the case. For the record of the House, I am advised that this quotation was in fact from journalist Ben Fordham reporting on the investigation. I provide this information so that it may be treated in the same manner as an answer to a Question in Writing.

I trust that this letter is of assistance to the House.

Your sincerely
SCOTT MORRISON
28 November 2019

Questions Without Notice: Additional Responses

Claressa Surtees
Clerk of the House of Representatives
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600
Dear Clerk

On 17 September, the Member for Cooper asked a question of me during Question Time that I took on notice:

Ms KEARNEY: My question is to the Prime Minister. How many registered aged-care facilities do not have a registered nurse on site 24 hours a day?

Mr MORRISON: I thank the member for her question. I'd be happy to take it on notice and report back to her.

It has come to my attention that the answer was not tabled. I provide the following information so that it may be treated in the same manner as an answer to a Question in Writing.

The Department of Health does not hold data on the staffing mix and numbers within individual aged care services/providers.

The new Aged Care Quality Standards (which commenced on July 1 2019), require approved providers of residential aged care to ensure they have a workforce that is sufficient, skilled and qualified to provide safe, respectful and quality care and services.

Whether a registered nurse is required is determined by the care needs of the care recipients.
The Aged Care Act 1997 does not prescribe the qualifications required by staff, or the number of staff required to be employed by an aged care service.

Commonwealth law does set out instances where a registered nurse is required, for example in assessment and care planning, and in the delivery of complex nursing procedures.

State and territory jurisdictions may also have their own requirements in relation to nurses and aged care homes.

I trust that this is of assistance to the House.

Your sincerely

SCOTT MORRISON

28 November 2019