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### SITTING DAYS—2015

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SEVENTH PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP
Members of the Speaker's Panel—Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP,
Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP,
Hon John Kenneth Cobb MP, Mr Patrick Martin Conroy MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Ms Sarah Moya Henderson MP, Mr Stephen James Irons MP,
Mr Craig Kelly MP, Ms Michelle Leanne Landry MP, Ms Clare Ellen O'Neil, MP,
Mrs Jane Prentice MP, Ms Melissa Lee Price MP,
Dr Andrew John Southcott MP, Mr Michael Sukkar MP,
Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP

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

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Malcolm Bligh Turnbull MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP
Government Whips—Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP and Mr Brett David Whiteley MP

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

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

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<td>Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
<td>IND.</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;
IND—Independent; NATSWA—The Nationals WA; CLP—Country Liberal Party;
AUS—Katter’s Australia Party; AG—Australian Greens; PUP—Palmer United Party

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

- Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
- Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
- Acting Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—D Heriot
- Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Senator Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator Hon Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Digital Government</td>
<td>Senator Hon Mitch Fifield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter Terrorism</td>
<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<td>Senator Hon James McGrath</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Dr Peter Hendy MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator Hon Scott Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia</td>
<td>Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects</td>
<td>Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>Hon Steven Ciobo MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>Senator Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator Hon George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>Senator Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Alex Hawke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Senator Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Hon Mal Brough MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science</td>
<td>Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Innovation</td>
<td>Hon Wyatt Roy MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</strong></td>
<td>Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Environment</strong></td>
<td>Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Cities and the Built Environment</td>
<td>Hon Jamie Briggs MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Hon. Ken Wyatt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Sport</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader on State and Territory</td>
<td>Senator Katy Gallagher*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Ed Husic MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting with Digital Innovation and Startups</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
<td>Terri Butler M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
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<td>Senator Sam Dastyari</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>Hon Shayne Neumann MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Sport</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families and Payments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disability Reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Doug Cameron</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Carers</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Payments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Child Safety and Prevention of</td>
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<td>Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
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<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
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* Senator Katy Gallagher’s appointment to the Shadow Ministry is effective from 1 November 2015. Senator the Hon Jan McLucas will serve as Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness and Shadow Minister for Mental Health, and represent the Shadow Minister for Northern Australia, the Shadow Minister for Health, the Shadow Assistant Minister for Health, the Shadow Minister for Sport and the Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs in the Senate until 31 October 2015.
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Tuesday, 10 November 2015

The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 12:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLS

Customs Amendment (China-Australia Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2015

Customs Tariff Amendment (China-Australia Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2015

Returned from Senate

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

COMMITTEES

Communications and the Arts Committee

Infrastructure, Transport and Cities Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER (12:01): I have received advice from the Chief Opposition Whip nominating members to be members of certain committees.

Mr BROUGH (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (12:01): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) Mr Ferguson, Mr Perrett and Ms Vamvakinou be appointed members of the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts; and

(2) Ms Collins, Mr Giles and Ms Ryan be appointed members of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Criminology Research) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (12:02): I rise to speak on the Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Criminology Research) Bill 2015. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Australian Crime Commission Act 2002, the ACC Act, and repeal the Criminology Research Act 1971, the CR Act, in order to merge the Australian Institute of Criminology into the Australian Crime Commission. The bill comprises two schedules. Schedule 1 makes amendments to the ACC Act. The purposes of those amendments in this schedule are to enable the merged agency to: continue to carry out the Australian Institute of Criminology's research work; share criminological research and information with any person, including the
private sector; and, thirdly, carry out commissioned research. Schedule 2 repeals the Criminology Research Act to abolish the AIC as a statutory agency.

The Australian Institute of Criminology, the AIC, was established in 1973 under the CR Act. As a Commonwealth statutory authority, the AIC is regulated under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013. Staff of the AIC are generally engaged under the Public Service Act 1999 but may also be employed or engaged by the AIC for a particular project. According to the AIC 2013-14 annual report:

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) has served as Australia's national research and knowledge centre on crime and justice for more than 40 years, undertaking and promulgating new research, monitoring and analysing crime trends, and providing advice to inform legislative, policy and practice change.

The independent status of the AIC has meant its output is not only robust, but trusted by government, law enforcement and justice agencies across the nation and internationally. Much of the AIC's work falls under the Commonwealth government's strategic research priorities, in particular, the priority themes of 'living in a changing environment', 'promoting population health and wellbeing' and 'securing Australia's place in a changing world'.

A Criminology Research Advisory Council, established under the CR Act in 2011, advises the director of the AIC on strategic research priorities, communications and on the Criminology Research Grants program. The advisory council consists of nine members who represent the Australian government and all states and territories. This composition ensures that areas targeted for research funding reflect both national and state and territory priorities. The Criminology Research Grants program managed by the AIC is funded by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. The director of the AIC approves a series of research grants each year, taking into account the recommendations of the Criminology Research Advisory Council. The program funds research that has relevance to jurisdictional policy in the areas of law, police, judiciary, corrections, mental health, social welfare, education and related fields.

The Australian Crime Commission commenced operation on 1 January 2003. It has its origins in the April 2002 Council of Australian Government Leaders Summit, which agreed that a new national framework was needed to meet the challenges of multi-jurisdictional crime. It replaced and combined the strategic and operational intelligence and specialist investigative capabilities of the National Crime Authority, the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, and the Office of Strategic Crime Assessments.

According to its latest annual report, the aim of the ACC is to reduce 'serious and organised crime threats of most harm to Australians and the national interest'.

To achieve this aim, the ACC has a range of special coercive powers such as the capacity to compel: attendance at examinations; the production of documents; and the answering of questions—similar to a royal commission. The ACC also has an intelligence-gathering capacity and a range of investigative powers common to law enforcement agencies, such as the power to tap phones, use surveillance devices and participate in controlled operations. Like the AIC, the ACC is regulated under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act and staff of the ACC are engaged under the Public Service Act. With that background, the 2014 Commission of Audit announced by the Abbott government and released in February 2014 made a number of recommendations, including that, 'Consolidated crime intelligence capability would also better support law enforcement operations.'
The Commission of Audit did not suggest the possibility of the AIC merging with the ACC but proposed that consideration be given to moving the AIC to a university. Prior to the 2015 budget, there was media speculation that the two bodies, the AIC and the ACC, would merge. At that time, I wrote to the minister requesting a briefing. However, the minister noted that government was yet to make a decision regarding the proposed merger and so would not be offering a briefing at that time.

Following the 2015 budget, the Minister for Justice announced the appointment of ACC CEO Chris Dawson as the newly appointed interim director of the AIC. At that time, Minister Keenan indicated that the government was considering whether the AIC should be placed within the ACC, but at that date a final decision had not been made. The minister said:

In the interim, the ACC and AIC will continue to exist and operate as separate entities, while working together on expanding existing relationships.

Finally, on 25 September 2015, the minister announced that the AIC would be placed within the ACC to ‘boost research capability at the nation's criminal intelligence agency’. The AIC is to be incorporated into the ACC as an independent research branch known as the Crime and Justice Research Centre, CJRC. The minister stressed that the merger is 'not about cutting costs or personnel of either agency; it's about creating a unified workforce incorporating staff of both agencies'.

The minister has stated that this merger brings together Australia's national criminal intelligence and research capabilities under one banner and that having a unified resource of this type will enrich our national understanding of criminal activity, including serious and organised crime and terrorism, allowing police, justice agencies and policy makers at all levels of government to adopt a more effective, efficient and evidence-based response to crime. Under the proposed merger, the AIC will carry its research functions over to the ACC, including its ability to undertake commissioned research, and the AIC's corporate functions will be merged with those of the ACC. The position of AIC Director will be abolished.

We have received some correspondence from various stakeholders raising concerns about the proposed merger. We have been briefed by the Attorney-General's Department regarding these concerns which have, for the most part, been satisfied.

Labor have been given an undertaking that this bill is not about savings measures and we will continue to support the strong and independent research capability that is vested in the Australian Institute of Criminology and will be known as the Crime and Justice Research Centre. The government will be held to account on its commitment that the merger will not result in job losses or erosion in employment standards for former AIC employees.

It is critical that the CJRC continues to be able to provide a strong and independent research capability that can be relied upon by law enforcement agencies across state and federal jurisdictions. This is why Labor has secured an assurance from the Minister for Justice that the CJRC will have the same access to the datasets currently used by the AIC. Further, Labor has secured an assurance that the CJRC will continue to operate an open access library at the JV Barry Library, which is a vital and well-respected resource for academics and criminologists in Australia and beyond.

Finally, Mr Speaker, to ensure proper scrutiny of this merger, Labor will be referring this bill to the Senate Legislation Committee for Legal and Constitutional Affairs. There we look
forward to having these issues tested on a more forensic basis and we want to ensure that the priorities of the AIC will not be lost or subsumed in the merger. We will carefully consider the views expressed to the committee and the final committee report when it is released. I thank the House.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth)(12:11): I wish to indicate that the position of the Labor Party on the Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Criminology Research) Bill, as the previous speaker indicated, is that we not oppose it, but we do have, in varying degrees, concerns and reservations about the proposal to amalgamate the Australian Institute of Criminology with the Australian Crime Commission. I acknowledge the work the member for Batman has done to get some commitments from government about retaining an element of independence for the staff of the former Institute of Criminology.

It is not possible to overstate the importance of this independence. My concern is that the stated intent of the government in putting these agencies together is to ensure that the research is more closely aligned with the operational requirements of the state, territory and federal law enforcement agencies. I think that is a concern. Of course you want the research to be incredibly useful for those agencies and it is entirely appropriate that you ensure you are producing useful research, but to say you want research that is more closely aligned with the operational requirements of those agencies is, for me, somewhat troubling. I am concerned that the ability for an independent body to produce and analyse datasets in a way that might challenge some of the fundamental assumptions made by law enforcement agencies, and assumptions made by the governments that are directing those law enforcement agencies, will be profoundly compromised. If you have a law enforcement agency which is very focused, as ours are, on the war on drugs, any independent analysis of data might suggest a harm minimisation approach or indeed an approach similar to those we see emerging in a number of jurisdictions in North America and in South America which is one of decriminalisation. The research and the analysis of data that would go to investigating the potential benefits of such a path might of course not be closely aligned with the operational requirements of a law enforcement agency that is very focused on the business-as-usual model. So I do think that there is a very real risk inherent in what we are proposing to do here with this amalgamation.

It is very important that we have independent data as policymakers in this place. We are trying to grapple with many difficult issues around crime, law enforcement and social cohesion. We absolutely need the ability both in government and in opposition to access reliable and useful data. I want to quote a very pre-eminent person in this area, Dr Don Weatherburn, Director of the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. Dr Weatherburn has this to say:

The abuse of crime statistics is so common it has in some quarters engendered great skepticism about them. The saying there are ‘lies, damned lies and statistics’ is probably nowhere more frequently uttered than in the context of crime statistics. … We have to make judgments about the prevalence of crime, about trends in crime, about the distribution of crime and about the impact of Government efforts to prevent and control crime. We cannot base these judgments on personal experience and anecdote. They have to be based on statistical information.

I discussed this with a former colleague, Paul Papalia of the Western Australia parliament. He is Labor’s corrective services spokesperson, and he has been doing an enormous amount of work in restorative justice, focusing on an evidence based approach to crime, punishment and rehabilitation. He speaks about the Crime Research Centre at UWA, which unfortunately has
now been closed down in Western Australia. It was established under Joe Berinson, who was one of my predecessors as the member for Perth in this place and who went on to become a very esteemed Attorney-General in Western Australia for a decade. One of the things that he established was the Crime Research Centre at UWA. It was a joint initiative that for over two decades provided the highest quality information.

They had access, because of the collaboration with government and the government's desire for an independent stream of analysis of the data, and that provided a great resource for policymaking. So, when people got on talkback radio and suggested that we needed mandatory sentencing or that this would be the way to go or that would be the way to go, we actually had some mechanism to look at what actually did work. We could actually get beyond the emotion that so often is involved in this notion of crime and punishment, and we could really look at the data and let the data deeply inform the decision-making process.

These are incredibly serious issues for social order and social cohesion. The idea that we should be flying blind or that we should want our pre-eminent national body that is involved in the analysis and preparation of crime statistics to be subject to the operational alignment of enforcement agencies, I think, is deeply concerning. Just as I am very concerned at the way the Barnett government has gradually withdrawn support from the Crime Research Centre in Western Australia leading ultimately to UWA deciding to shut it down, I think that we need to be very careful about what we are doing here. I hope that this is an issue that is properly and fully scrutinised within the Senate committee.

One of the things that I have found most disappointing in moving into the federal arena is how often there is a very clear lack of evidence available to guide policy or to provide a justification for policy. Indeed—and I will get on my little Western Australian hobbyhorse again—today, I raised the issue of why the grants commission is able to say that we are going to change fundamentally the allowance for remoteness. In giving up the GST, we are no longer going to say: the more remote you are the more expensive it becomes to provide services. The remoteness factor will expire once you reach 1,254 kilometres. I prepared a series of questions to the agencies about why 1,254 kilometres would become the magical point. It is the ultimate distance between Sydney and the boundary of New South Wales. But, putting that aside, why would this be chosen as the basis for ending remoteness?

They came back with an answer that centred around, 'Well, it seems intuitively right that at some point the connection between remoteness and cost would not be linear.'

It is 'intuitively' felt. That is the basis on which Western Australia was ripped off another $350 million in our GST take. I can say over and over again that there are areas one comes across where there really are not sound statistics or sound evidence on which policy is based. Much of it is based on intuition, anecdote, gut or perhaps popular sentiment. It is important to take popular sentiment into account. It is also important that we allow popular sentiment to be informed by real rigorous analysis. My experience in many years of public life is that people actually want the right thing for the society and deserve to have good information.

I want to finish by quoting Arie Freiberg, Emeritus Professor of the Faculty of Law at Monash University. He says:

First, as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the premier statistical body in Australia, states on its website: statistics 'form the basis of our democracy and provide us with the necessary knowledge to assess the health and progress of our society'. They are fundamental to the task of holding governments.
Statistics must be public, accessible, valid and reliable and governments owe it to their citizens to provide this information to enable them to understand and evaluate government policies. I think that really sums up just how central this debate is. I once again say that, whilst I can see, perhaps in the short term, cost savings or some close collaborations developing between the Australian Crime Commission and our statistical body, I believe that melding the Institute of Criminology so that it can align itself more closely with the objectives of law enforcement agencies is a profoundly wrong insight. I would hope that the government and, indeed, the Senate thinks about this very deeply.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (12:25): I note from the outset that Labor will not oppose the bill, which will be referred to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee for further scrutiny and to give stakeholders an opportunity to raise their concerns. We have taken at face value the government's undertaking that this merger is not a savings measure, but I do believe that, as the member for Perth has so articulately outlined, we are merging together two organisations which necessarily have very different cultures. The Australian Crime Commission must take secrecy and privacy seriously. Lives are at stake in their investigations, and it is absolutely vital that they are able to protect confidences. But the Australian Institute of Criminology, which will be known as the Crime and Justice Research Centre, must instead have a culture of openness, disseminating data and research as broadly as possible.

The member for Perth shares many of my heroes in the world of criminology and good, evidence led criminal justice policy. Don Weatherburn was a strong influence on me as a whippersnapper becoming interested in data and public policy. Mark Kleiman's book When Brute Force Fails: How to Have Less Crime and Less Punishment reshaped my view on crime and punishment. Bruce Weston's work on US incarceration shines a light on a path that Australia should not go down. Reformers on both sides of politics—Paul Papalia and Greg Smith among them—have shown that it is possible to take Australia down a path where we have less crime and less punishment.

Labor has secured an assurance that the Crime and Justice Research Centre will continue to operate an open-access JV Barry Library, which is a vital resource for academics and criminologists, but I believe there are other issues that need to be taken up. To the extent that the proposed legislation for the formation of the Crime and Justice Research Centre takes the old legislation and simply incorporates a new framework, we are missing the chance for positive change. We should be opening up criminological such as is presently occurring in fields such as education and health. Principles of open data, open access to publications, transparency in methods and further collaborations with the academic sector will set a tone for a culture shift over time.

We know that academic researchers too often struggle to get access to good crime data. For research that I did when I was an Australian National University professor using crime statistics at the local government level on a monthly basis, I had to go to every state and territory police department in order to get those data. That does not make sense in the 21st century where we are talking about aggregated crime statistics at a local level. These should be available to everyone. Open data not only encourages better research but also allows us to weed out mistakes. The possibility of subsequent researchers replicating the data ensures that we are less likely to go down a path towards error.
If the government is serious about an evidence based response to crime, it should have a look at the model followed in the United States Second Chance Act of 2007 and, indeed, a range of other United States bills in which a small portion of funding—a percentage point or two—is set aside for the purpose of high-quality, rigorous evaluation. These evaluations—typically randomised evaluations but otherwise high-quality natural experiments—allow a better feedback loop, improving the quality of public dollars spent within an organisation such as the Australian Crime Commission. Unfortunately, this is not done at the moment. To take one example, a survey of juvenile arson intervention programs in Australia carried out by the Australian Institute of Criminology’s researchers Damon Muller and Ashley Stebbins concluded in 2007:

Formal, independent evaluation of programs should now be undertaken to ensure that they are effective in stopping firefighting behaviour among young people.

I could pick a host of other examples where the evidence bar at the moment in our criminal justice interventions is too low.

I am also concerned that it is not clear under the new arrangements how academics and researchers could appeal if the Australian Crime Commission refused to provide data for academic research or to release research findings from a particular piece of research. The Australian Crime Commission routinely deals with a diverse range of sensitive information and it is experienced in ensuring that that information is appropriately secured and dealt with. As part of the merger, we understand that the Australian Crime Commission will put technical administrative mechanisms in place to ensure personal information collected for research purposes is stored appropriately. Beyond that, it would be of great benefit to researchers if the Australian Crime Commission was directed to publish a yearly list of its research projects and its data holdings. That could facilitate better use of data and better collaboration between the Australian Crime Commission and the academic community. Our law enforcement and protection agencies, and thus our researchers, are increasingly dependent on accurate and readily available data and intelligence. Many of the advances in policing, such as hot-spot policing, are driven by the better use of data. We should be pursuing that through the Australian Crime Commission as well.

We need to ask ourselves how these changes will help in finding ways to solve the problem that comes from Australia’s rising incarceration rates. In the middle of 2014, the Australian incarceration rate reached a 10-year high of 33,791 people—that is, more than 185 prisoners per 100,000 adult Australians. The rising incarceration rate has not been principally caused by a rise in crime; indeed, the murder rate is now about half of what it was in the late 1980s. If you look across most violent crime categories, you see a reduction since the late 1980s but you see a rise in incarceration rates.

Australia may have started off European settlement as a nation of prisoners, but by 1905 we had 110 prisoners per 100,000. By 1920 that was down to 52 prisoners per 100,000 and it was only in 1998 that we hit 100 prisoners per 100,000. Now we are at almost double that with 185 prisoners per 100,000. Australian National University criminologist Adam Graycar notes:

… many of our prison population in 1900 were incarcerated principally as a result of their mental state … and in 2000 this situation has changed very little. In 1900 young males contributed significantly to criminal activities, and at the end of the century this continues to be the case.
Prison is expensive. According to the Productivity Commission, Australia spent $3.3 billion on corrective services in 2013-14. The amount we spend on locking people up has been growing at an average rate of 2.3 per cent a year since 2009, almost double the rate of growth in spending on student assistance schemes such as Youth Allowance and Austudy. We know that people who are dealing with poverty, unstable home lives and addiction are much more likely to have run-ins with the police and the courts and are more likely to experience the adverse consequences of imprisonment when they do. High-quality crime research can show us how to intervene early in order to save lives and to save taxpayer dollars at the same time. The research carried out by Australian criminologists is an important mission.

I want to offer a few more reservations and suggestions which might perhaps be taken up by the Senate Standing Committees on Legal and Constitutional Affairs as it scrutinises this bill. On privacy, the bill engages the right to privacy by inserting a new information disclosure regime into the Australian Crime Commission Act that supplements the existing information dissemination regime. The issue of privacy is particularly sensitive in the area of crime research. It is often used to prevent researchers getting access to criminal justice data. Perhaps what we need is a general statement that, notwithstanding the Privacy Act, the Australian Crime Commission will seek wherever possible to make data available to academics. The Australian Crime Commission is experienced in ensuring that information is appropriately secured and dealt with. I understand that as a part of this merger it will put technical and administrative mechanisms in place to ensure personal information is collected, stored and used appropriately so that it might better facilitate use of the data as a result of this merger.

Under the Criminology Research Act the Australian Institute of Criminology is limited to those objectives of promoting justice and reducing crime in performing those functions. The Australian Crime Commission's criminological research and related activities might continue to promote those objectives but it will not be limited to those objectives. I think it would be useful to know what this might mean and what might be included if the Australian Crime Commission's objectives become defined by their indefiniteness.

On the issue of oversight of the board, the Australian Crime Commission board already has the function of providing strategic direction to the Australian Crime Commission and determining its priorities. Following the broadening of the Australian Crime Commission functions under this bill, the board can provide strategic direction or it can determine the Crime Commission's criminological research priorities under its existing broad powers. In doing so, the board may take advice from a non-legislated advisory body that includes both justice and law enforcement representation. That 'may' does not go far enough. The board ought to be required, in my view, to seek this kind of advice in setting its research priorities. It is important that the board, a non-legislated advisory board, ought to meet at least twice a year, be focused on research and have at least half of its membership from the criminological research community. It would be useful if its minutes were published so that outside researchers can see that the Australian Institute of Criminology becoming part of the Australian Crime Commission has not reduced the quality of Australian crime research.

The Criminology Research Special Account will continue but the modifications required by this merger need to be monitored. The amendment to the bill appears to leave room for funds from the CR Special Account to be allocated for research or activities not tied to
criminology research. I would hope that future amendments will limit the amount that can be spent on administration and ensure that the Crime Commission has no temptation to direct funds from the CR Special Account to research that is not solely criminology research.

This bill will enable the ACC to charge fees for services that it provides in performing any of its designated functions relating to crime research. It might be worth considering a specific out clause exempting academic researchers from charges for access to data, while leaving commercial consultancies liable for such charges.

Proposed new subsection 15B(2) provides that the fee must not amount to taxation. That means it must be reasonably related to the cost of providing the services. The government intends that the ACC will be able to charge for services relating to crime research on a fee-for-service basis, as the AIC currently does.

The AIC currently undertakes a significant level of commissioned work for Commonwealth, state and territory agencies and the private sector, including research projects, surveys, program evaluations and other administrative type services. The government proposes that this work would continue through the ACC post-merger but has not made it sufficiently clear, in my view, how it will deal with the potential for real conflicts of interest, how these transactions will be handled or whether the ACC is subject to the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

Finally, item 2 in the bill, the repeal of the Criminology Research Act 1971, will abolish the AIC as a statutory agency and remove the requirement that there be a director of the AIC. The Criminology Research Advisory Council will no longer be a statutory body, but it is not yet clear what its role will be in relation to the ACC.

Let's be clearer again as we go ahead here. The advisory council should continue its role as a non-legislated body providing advice to the Australian Crime Commission’s CEO and the Australian Crime Commission Board. If that is not the case, we will lose effective oversight of the criminology research funds. That advisory council needs to meet, publish minutes and have appropriate representation—preferably 51 per cent crime researchers—to maintain appropriate oversight.

The issues that the Australian Institute of Criminology deals with are fundamental to tackling crime and disadvantage in Australia. It ought not be beyond our wit to do both—to see an Australia that locks up fewer citizens and provides more opportunities to disadvantaged Australians, where people are safer in the streets but where lives are not blighted by incarceration.

I mentioned at the outset the United States path, where the odds of a black American high school dropout going to jail by their 35th birthday have gone to two in three. America now incarcerates over one per cent of its adult population, a level higher than in all other developed countries. This is not a path we want Australia to go down, and good crime research can help us avoid it.

Mr BROUGH (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (12:40): I will say at the outset I will attempt to address some of the questions raised by honourable members in their speeches and I thank them for their contributions. On behalf of Minister Keenan, I offer this summing up. The Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Criminology Research) Bill brings two of the nation's leading authorities on crime and
Australia's law enforcement and justice agencies are increasingly dependent on accurate research, information and intelligence to ensure that our officers on the ground, at our borders and in our intelligence agencies can do their jobs. Accurate research, information and intelligence is also essential to deliver evidence based crime prevention strategies and effective justice policies that benefit the Australian community. A combined agency with strengthened research capabilities will be able to provide a better evidence base for our agencies to identify the patterns and associations that can help detect, disrupt and undermine those who seek to do our community harm.

In addressing some of the questions raised by the honourable members in the second reading debate, I am advised that, in respect of whether the proposed merger will impact on the independence of the AIC's research, the answer is emphatically no. Under the merger, the AIC would carry its research functions over to the ACC, forming a new research branch, the Australian Crime and Justice Research Centre, which will be headed by a senior criminologist and research specialist. Furthermore, the ACC and AIC agreed on this structure following consultation with the AIC's stakeholders, including state and territory justice agencies and external criminology researchers, who reiterated the importance of the AIC remaining an independent research unit within the ACC.

I was further asked: what are the benefits for both of these agencies? I am advised a merger presents significant opportunities for both the AIC and the ACC. By merging these two agencies, staff would have greater access to classified information. This would enable them to develop better informed and targeted research that will be of greater value to the law enforcement and justice agencies across Australia. A merger would also provide the ACC with a specialist research capability that will support the development of evidence based responses to serious organised criminal threats. A merger would also provide significant opportunities to the staff of both agencies by providing greater diversity in the type of work that they can undertake and, of course, the professional opportunities available to them.

The member for Fraser particularly queried whether the criminology researchers would still be able to access the AIC's datasets. I can confirm for the member for Fraser, who is of course listening to every word I am uttering here today—

Dr Leigh: Hanging on it!

Mr BROUGH: He is hanging on every word. The answer to your question is yes. The question again was whether the criminology researchers would be able to access the AIC's database. The merged agency will continue to respond to data requests from researchers in the same way as the AIC currently does. Each request will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with the level of detail provided subject to the normal ethical and privacy considerations.

I believe the member for Fraser further asked what will happen to the JV Barry Library. The library will be maintained, I can advise the member. The merged agency will also work towards digitising this collection to improve public access, particularly for those located outside the ACT.

Furthermore, the question was raised: what are the implications for the AIC's research? Following the merger, the AIC would carry its research functions over to the ACC, forming a
new research branch, the Australian Crime and Justice Research Centre. The Australian Crime and Justice Research Centre would continue to carry out the AIC's three main work streams, those being statistical monitoring programs, fee-for-service research and thematic research on crime and justice priorities.

Finally, what requirements will the ACC need to comply with in collecting personal information for research purposes? That is clearly an important question. I am advised the ACC will be subject to the ethical requirements set by the National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines for research involving human subjects. These include the requirement to obtain informed consent when collecting data from participants and to ensure unit record data, which has the potential to identify a single participant, is only used for research purposes. An ethics committee will oversee the ACC's compliance with these requirements, as is currently the case with the AIC.

Finally, there is one last point that was requiring clarification and it related to people having access to correct their own information held by the ACC. Again, I am advised, that, although the ACC is exempt from the Privacy Act, it is subject to the Freedom of Information Act. This allows individuals to rely on the access and correction provisions in the FOI Act to access the correct personal information that the ACC may hold on them.

The proposed merger is not about cutting staff, nor is it about cutting the functions or the costs of the AIC or the ACC. It is about leveraging the strengths of both agencies to achieve the best research and intelligence outcomes for the Australian community. With the merger of the AIC into the ACC, the ACC will be better able to fulfil its role as Australia's national criminal intelligence agency, supporting and informing the efforts of law enforcement agencies across Australia. Similarly, the new Australian Crime and Justice Research Centre in the ACC will continue to prepare and disseminate world-leading criminological research, which informs our understanding of the trends and developments in crime and justice. In this way, the bill delivers on the government's commitment to tackle crime and to keep our community safe. I commend the bill to the house.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation.

Third Reading

Mr BROUGH (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (12:47): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Student Loans (Overseas Debtors Repayment Levy) Bill 2015

Education Legislation Amendment (Overseas Debt Recovery) Bill 2015

Returned from Senate

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

Senates amendments—
(1) Schedule 5, page 10 (lines 1 to 26), omit the Schedule.
(2) Schedule 6, page 11 (lines 1 to 23), omit the Schedule.

Mr BROUGH (Fisher—Minister for Defence Materiel and Science and Special Minister of State) (12:48): I move:
That the amendments be agreed to.
Question agreed to.

Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015
Second Reading

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

Mr MARLES (Corio) (12:48): I rise to speak in support of the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015, which deals with the very vexed area of temporary work being conducted in this country by non-citizens who are in Australia on visas which provide for temporary work rights.

This issue perhaps has come most into light in recent weeks and months with the case of 7-Eleven, which was something investigated by Fairfax and Four Corners, which found, across the 7-Eleven chain in Australia, a systemic underpayment of its workers across something like 620 stores. The investigation found that there were thousands of international students—who were here on that visa, with a work right associated with that visa—who were being exploited in the course of their work. It led to the resignation of the chairman of 7-Eleven in Australia, Russell Withers.

There have also been reports undertaken by Four Corners this year, in respect of persons on 417 visas in the food picking and packing sector, in respect of some of Australia's largest companies. There have been reports of people being routinely harassed and assaulted at work. It was also alleged that women were being targeted sexually, with women being propositioned for sex and asked to perform sexual favours in exchange for visas. All these reports and allegations are deeply concerning. It is why Labor was keen to establish, in the other place, an inquiry into the nature of temporary work in Australia and ways in which we can deal with that.

Visas which provide for work rights obviously have an important role to play. Section 457 visas, which are the subject of this bill and this amendment, clearly have a role to play within our economy where there are skills gaps in the labour market and where it is essential that, in order to give rise to more Australian jobs, we bring in expertise from beyond our shores to fill those skills gaps and allow enterprises to continue. That though, is the point of a 457 visa. Student visas have their purpose as well. Student visas facilitate what is a really important educational export industry in this country, and, obviously, if a student is coming from
overseas to study in Australia it is important that they be given the opportunity to work, to sustain themselves, while they are studying, just as any citizen would do if they were studying. Hence student visas provide for those work rights. But it is important that the study comes first and that what those visas are about is facilitating people's study in this country. Working holiday visas also have a role to play. Indeed, I went to Britain on the British version of a working holiday visa between the time I left school and when I went to university. That was a fantastic opportunity for me to experience life in the UK and to work there as part of that. That is an experience that we offer to thousands of people coming to Australia, and in the process that assists our tourist industry.

But what is important in respect of all of these visas is that they are confined to the work which they are meant to do and that they not be used and ultimately abused as a form of cheap labour in this country. I think what underlies all of this ought to be a fundamental principle that, in Australia, you should work under Australian conditions of employment. That needs to be the focus of all of our efforts in this regard. The kind of exploitation that we have seen reported previously in the media is exploitation that we seek to stamp out. Indeed, this bill before us today takes a step in that direction.

I would commend the government on instigating, earlier in its term, an independent review of the 457 system of visas. It was chaired by John Azarius. This, I think, was a really good piece of work. We would not agree with every one of the recommendations that came out of it, but there were a number of ideas which were raised as part of that review, and I understand that one of those ideas is the substance of this legislation. Some of the other really significant points that were made in that review were the suggestion of establishing a tripartite ministerial advisory council—one that consists of government, the union movement and the employer movement—which would be appropriately resourced, well resourced, to oversee what skills gaps there are in the Australian labour market and in that sense be the custodian of where it is appropriate for 457 visas to be issued and where it is not.

Another recommendation coming out of the Azarius review was the proposition of placing a training levy on 457 visas that are granted. That makes sense in two senses. One is that it increases the barrier associated with a 457 visa so that it is not used simply as an avenue for cheap labour. Secondly, it is creating a levy which is directed to precisely the issue that 457s are there to try to address, and that is where there are skills gaps in the Australian labour market.

The Azarius review also went to a range of measures that looked at the question of better enforcement—better enforcement of our labour laws and more streamlined coordination between our industrial system and our immigration system so that there can be better working between the agencies to ensure that there is enforcement of visa conditions but also enforcement of our industrial conditions so that we can rightly say that people who are working in Australia work under Australian conditions of employment.

To go to the specifics of this bill, this picks up one of the recommendations of the Azarius review, namely that it be made unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by visa applicants for a migration outcome and that this be reinforced by a robust penalty and conviction framework. In that context, the sponsor often will be the employer of the person. This is an employer sponsored visa program. Of course, the visa applicant in these circumstances is the employee. Having a situation where it would be unlawful for the employer in this context to effectively
charge the employee or to receive a benefit from the employee for a migration outcome is a very appropriate step to take, and we absolutely support this bill in taking that step.

Having said that, we would also welcome, though, as my speech alludes to, the prospect of others of the measures that were raised in the Azarius review and indeed other ideas that are around in this space being taken up in legislation as well. To that end, I would like to foreshadow with you that in the other place— not here but in the other place—the opposition will be moving amendments to this legislation to include other measures which seek to improve the framework that exists in relation to those noncitizens who are engaged in temporary work under visa conditions in Australia.

I want to go briefly through the amendments that we will be putting in the Senate. The first is seeking to apply this bill, this amendment, not just to 457 visas but also to persons on student visas and persons on working holiday visas.

The second is to make clear that, for the penalty regime which is outlined in this bill, which can in some circumstances apply to a degree to the visa applicant, the employee, themselves, that not be able to occur in circumstances where it is clear that the visa applicant has been coerced by the sponsor or a related third party into offering, making, asking for or receiving a benefit or, similarly, if the visa applicant has been the subject of human trafficking, forced labour or slavery offences under the criminal code. In other words, if those people are clearly victims of this situation, they ought not to be the subject of a penalty.

The third set of amendments that we will be moving in the other place is to increase the level of penalties for sponsors in respect of these breaches of the immigration act.

The fourth is to institute a new measure which would say that any person in this country who is working under a student visa or a working holiday visa cannot have an ABN. That is to say that if they are working under those visa conditions then they need to do so under a contract of employment.

The fifth set of amendments will deal with the question of protections for those who are whistleblowers in this space. There was some amnesty provided in respect of those at 7-Eleven who brought forward the cases of exploitation that occurred, but it is often a very difficult situation for people who are on a visa, who may well feel that they are putting themselves at risk in terms of their ongoing ability to maintain their visa in this country, to come forth and raise issues such as these. It is important that there is a robust system of protection for them.

The sixth set of amendments will be to require the minister to table an annual report about the operation and the impact of provisions which are introduced as part of this legislation. And the seventh will be to enable registered employee organisations—unions—to be able to undertake prosecutions for breaches of the Migration Act in this space.

Those amendments will be presented to the Senate. I thought it appropriate as an opposition that we outline those here so that both the government and the public are aware of the way in which we will approach this. As for our dealing with this bill in the House today, we absolutely support this measure. It is an important step forward. It is one of a number of steps forward that we need to take in this space, and we commend it to the House.

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (13:00): I rise today in support of the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015.
This bill seeks to make amendments to the Migration Act 1958 insofar as introducing a new criminal and civil penalty structure as punitive means to outlaw the practice whereby sponsors seek payment in return for effective sponsorship of persons seeking employment in Australia. The amendments in this bill will have a broad application across temporary and permanent work visa programs, including the much-publicised 457 visa.

In March of this year the coalition government released its response to the independent review into integrity in the subclass 457 visa program, also known as the Subclass 457 Integrity Review. This review was commissioned by this government upon coming into office in response to much confusion surrounding the practices of 457 visas. This bill refers specifically to one particular recommendation of the review into the 457 visa program—that is, recommending that the practice of payments to sponsors of visa applicants be made illegal.

The Visa subclass 457 integrity review report, released on 10 September 2014, also recommended that payment for a migration outcome be reinforced through a penalty-and-conviction framework. The government supports and accepts this recommendation, which now forms the central component of this bill. This bill extends the implementation of this recommendation to other temporary and permanent work visas, thus not only the 457 visa is affected. In total, the bill covers five temporary sponsored work visas and two skilled permanent employer-sponsored visas. This broad application is a result of the 457 review panel recommending that any sponsored work visa was at risk of charging for a migration outcome.

Currently, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, upon receiving allegations regarding persons offering or receiving money for an outcome, may conduct an investigation. However, at present no penalties exist to deter this conduct—this practice is not currently unlawful. This conduct does, however, risk undermining Australia's migration program through persons and organisations offering or receiving a monetary inducement for a migration outcome.

The payments-for-visas activity and charging for an outcome is unacceptable. Unfortunately, in my electorate of Dobell many restaurant and cafe operators have received cold calls from persons seeking to sign the business owner up to sponsoring a person seeking work in Australia. In the cases I have been advised of, the tout advises that they have individuals from India seeking to come to Australia to work as chefs or kitchenhands, and if a positive migration outcome is received the tout receives payment of up to $5,000 for each individual placed with an Australian employer.

Now, $5,000 per positive migration outcome is a significant amount for the tout. The migration agency who the tout is engaged by also receives their cut of the total payment received. However, under the current legislation such financial gain is permissible for sponsors and third parties who charge for an outcome. This practice is preying on people's desperation and, sadly, it has the ability to cause extensive negative repercussions for Australian wages and conditions. Unfortunately, the people who are often charged payment to obtain employment with an Australian employer are the most vulnerable, seeking to become new citizens trying to do the right thing.

Those born on foreign shores and heading to Australia to start a new life can come unstuck if they encounter an unscrupulous sponsor or third party who charges substantial fees for a migration outcome. It is not unrealistic to see that the most vulnerable new Australians—
being those who speak poor, if any, English—are unfortunately those most targeted by those charging to obtain an Australian employment visa.

This bill will provide a strong disincentive for those currently charging for a migration outcome. A framework for criminal, civil and administrative sanctions against those that obtain financial advantage from the sale of a migration outcome will be implemented. Under this legislation, the ‘selling’ of sponsorship will now become an offence, with punitive measures applicable to those continuing to engage in this practice. The criminal offence of asking for or receiving a benefit in return for visa sponsorship will carry a court-imposed maximum penalty upon conviction of up to two years imprisonment or up to $64,800, which is 360 penalty units, or both.

A civil penalty of a maximum of up to $43,200, which is 240 penalty units, will also apply. The bill also introduces civil penalties for persons who ask for or receive a benefit in return for sponsorship, with a maximum pecuniary penalty of up to $43,200, which is 240 penalty units. Likewise, civil penalties will be introduced for persons who offer or provide a benefit to another person in return for sponsorship at a maximum pecuniary penalty of up to $43,200—240 units. This bill provides that in cases of bodies corporate, partnerships or committees of management of unincorporated organisations that individuals may be found in certain circumstances to be liable for an offence.

This bill also includes a new discretionary power which allows for the cancellation of a visa where there is evidence of payment for visas having occurred. The cancellation not only applies to the specific visa that has been paid for but also automatically applies to visas held by the individual’s family members as well. In keeping with other cancellation procedures, the visa holder, and any respective family members who have also had their visas consequently cancelled, will be afforded the opportunity to seek a review of the decision.

Payments for visas also have the potential to reduce genuine employment opportunities for Australians, and this is of major concern to me, particularly as Dobell has a high youth unemployment rate and I am a strong advocate for jobs for our locals. The amendments in this bill secure the employment prospects for Australians, as they ensure overseas workers are able to fill roles that they are suitably qualified for and are not simply obtaining employment in return for making a payment to a sponsor. This bill also ensures employment opportunities in Australia are not reduced, and the impact on Australian wages and conditions is non-existent.

There is another group of people benefiting from this bill, and that is overseas workers seeking employment and a new life here in Australia. The amendments in this bill significantly reduce the ability for exploitation or extortion by the sponsor of their visa. The amendments ensure that only those overseas workers with genuine skills and appropriate backgrounds are achieving employment opportunities in Australia, not those who are willing to pay for these jobs. The bill will strengthen the overall integrity of Australia's migration program and support the genuine intention of visas being granted in the first instance.

There is anecdotal evidence that the exploitation of foreign workers has been occurring for many years, yet nothing has been done to date. The coalition government, however, is committed to rectifying this blight on our skilled migration system and ensuring that protective measures are enshrined in appropriate legislation. The explanatory memorandum to the bill states:
The Government considers that 'payment for visas' activity is unacceptable because it undermines the integrity of Australia's visa programmes. It is not acceptable for sponsors, employers or other third parties to make a personal gain from their position in a 'payment for visas' arrangement and it is not acceptable for a visa holder to become an Australian permanent resident by engaging in 'payment for visas' behaviour. Applicants who have paid for their visa are more vulnerable to exploitation and extortion by their sponsor, behaviour which endangers workers and undermines Australian workplace law.

There is no doubt as to the timeliness of these new strengthening measures, particularly given the recent insights through the Senate committee inquiry into 'the impact of Australia's temporary work visa programs on the Australian labour market and on the temporary work visa holders'. The inquiry investigated the exploitation and extortion of visa workers across Australia. Notably, it has investigated the falsification of wage and employment records by 7-Eleven franchisees, unveiling a culture of the systemic underpayment of wages and entitlements of international students working on temporary visas. Through the inquiry there have been revelations that some franchisees have demanded up to $70,000 from their employees in return for the sponsorship of their visa. As at 30 June 2015 there were just over one million temporary visa holders in Australia. They, just like every other worker in Australia, are entitled to basic rights and protections in their workplace, yet they are the most vulnerable to exploitation. The very fact that they become reliant upon their employer for the continuance of their visa leaves them exposed to threats, extortion and being forcibly overworked and underpaid. These findings are a mere glimpse of why this bill is so crucial.

The coalition government is taking the vital steps necessary to protect these vulnerable workers by removing the ability for sponsors, employers or any other third parties to exert such overwhelming control over visa holders. According to a report by the Migration Council of Australia in 2013, 48 per cent of all 457 visa holders who were included in the survey expressed that their motive for their application in the first instance was their desire to live in Australia or become a permanent resident. Seventy-one per cent of those surveyed had the intention to become a permanent resident at the expiration of their visa. These survey results reflect an inherent genuine desire for visa holders to work and live legitimately in Australia and make a meaningful contribution to the Australian economy and their local community. The Australian Council of Trade Unions, in their submission to the Senate committee inquiry, stated:

This desire for permanent residency is perfectly understandable on the part of those visa holders, but it also makes them more susceptible to exploitation and reluctant to make any complaint that may put their employment at risk. It is a vicious circle where the fact that they are unlikely to report any exploitation that occurs makes them all the more likely to be exploited in the first place.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* recently reported on a particular student who, upon completion of his studies, was looking for an Australian business to sponsor him. An owner of numerous takeaway businesses made an offer to him: for $45,000 in cash and the acceptance of $11 per hour to work in a shop, he could receive a working visa. By the time this particular student had exhausted all options and returned to that business owner, the cost of his visa sponsorship had jumped to $60,000. This is blatant exploitation and is effectively a form of modern day slavery that must be eradicated. These unscrupulous business owners or third parties must be penalised and brought to account for their appalling 'payment for visa' conduct.
Australia is regarded as an attractive and desirable country to visit, live, study, work and raise a family. Indeed, our economy needs skilled migration to fill the gaps in the Australian workforce to support our industries and businesses, but this should not be at the expense of workers' rights and liberties, whether they are Australian citizens or migrants. Recently the Minister for Employment, the Hon. Michaelia Cash, established a ministerial working group to consider additional means of educating and protecting foreign workers in Australia, and I commend the minister for her commitment to continued support of our foreign workers. This is a hand-in-glove approach to this bill, not only ensuring that there will now be legal penalties for engaging in 'payment for sponsorship' activities but also creating a real and practical framework to ensure that foreign workers are equipped and confident in their understanding of their rights and obligations while working in Australia. It is a wise and thorough approach to minimising any possible threats to those who may be vulnerable to exploitation.

There are still many foreign workers who have been caught up in a scheme of payment for sponsorship but are too afraid to speak up because of the threats of exposure, reporting and even deportation. Foreign workers who choose to come to Australia to live and work should not be placed under such duress. It is important that they are appropriately armed with the full understanding of their rights and that those who seek to take advantage of them will be held to lawful account.

The working group, however, will continue to be mindful that any practices and procedures that are put in place will not create further burdens or costs for businesses that choose to sponsor foreign workers. The government recognises that it is counterproductive to create further bureaucracy which may become a disincentive for sponsorship to continue. This bill and the minister's working group together create a holistic approach to protecting foreign workers.

I thank the minister for bringing this bill before the House, and I applaud her continued dedication to protecting the fundamental rights of all workers in Australia. We want Australia to continue to be seen as a welcoming destination for foreign workers as their contribution to our workforce and the Australian economy is important. History has shown the contribution of migrant labour to this great country. We must never forget the contribution of migrant labour in building the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme—by far the largest engineering project ever undertaken in Australia. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr Kelvin Thomson (Wills) (13:16): Quite possibly the worst case of intergenerational theft is the way that the full employment of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s has been allowed to disappear and the generations to come have been left with lives blighted by job insecurity. Unemployment in Broadmeadows, Melbourne, just to the north of my electorate, is higher than Spain and equal to Greece. As the Victorian member for Broadmeadows, Frank McGuire, points out:

Youth unemployment in a community with twice as many Muslim families than any other Victorian electorate living side-by-side with Christian refugees from Iraq and Syria is perilously high—estimated above 40 per cent.

He rightly says:

One of the best anti-radicalisation strategies is a job that helps connect the disconnected.
In Australia job insecurity is being needlessly generated as a consequence of massive migrant worker programs.

In Australia we have unemployment of 800,000 and many more people underemployed, or on Disability Support Pensions, who would work if work opportunities were there for them. At the same time, as the member for Dobell correctly pointed out in her remarks, we have over one million people in Australia on temporary entry permits which give them work rights—over one million!

It is claimed that employers need these migrant workers to do jobs which Australian workers are not qualified or willing to do. The workers are supposed to enjoy salaries and working conditions as good or better than those which Australian workers doing the same work would receive—but the reality is totally different. There are hundreds of cases of exploitation of temporary migrant workers. They are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Their continued stay in Australia essentially depends on their employer's ongoing approval and many of them, as the member for Dobell also pointed out, aspire to achieve permanent residence in Australia.

I will cite three which were brought to public attention in February 2015 by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and which illustrate on-the-ground reality as opposed to the theory used to justify 457 and other temporary work visas. The cases involve the food producing company Manildra. At MSM Milling two Filipino workers were held captive, by two Filipino managers, in a house for a day before being allowed out to buy food. At the Nutramix plant at Narrabri, eight Filipino workers were working 10 hours a day, six days a week, for as little as $10 per hour. Six were living in a one-bedroom house and two in shipping containers. They were dismissed from their jobs and forced out of their accommodation in the town in the middle of the night. At the Manildra sugar and starch plant at Bomaderry, 16 Filipinos and 13 Chinese workers were paid as little as $4 per hour and made to work seven days a week.

For years now, I have been drawing attention to the potential for abuse of temporary migrant worker programs. The fact is that there are many millions of people—perhaps hundreds of millions of people—living in poorer countries who would live in Australia in a heartbeat if they could. This understandable aspiration leaves them wide open to exploitation and abuse. They are prepared to come to Australia as temporary workers and work for much less than Australian wages and under much poorer conditions than we regard as acceptable in this country. Sometimes this is because the wages, while undermining Australian standards, are much higher than what they would receive in their home country. Sometimes it is because they believe that being in Australia will give them a foot in the door, they will not have to return to their home country and they will achieve permanent residence—and the member for Dobell made the point about surveys which backs this up.

This fundamental dynamic undermines the whole concept of temporary migrant worker programs. In theory, the workers should not be exploited. In theory, Australia's standards of pay and conditions, workplace health and safety, and the like should not be undermined but in reality they are. I have been raising this issue for years but there has been far too little action to address it. As a consequence, we have reached the shameful state of affairs which has led to this bill.
What this bill does is to outlaw employer sponsors being paid by foreign workers for a migration outcome. You would think that this would be unlawful already, and that such an abuse could not happen, but you would be wrong. The independent review into integrity in the subclass 457 program found that some sponsors in the 457 visa program have been paid by visa applicants in return for a visa outcome. Sometimes this is initiated by the visa applicant. The worker offers the employer an inducement in order to receive a visa. On other occasions it is the employer sponsor who initiates the rort—for example, by paying the worker less than they are entitled to receive or requesting separate payments in return for continuing as a sponsor.

Remarkably, the government has no specific powers to take legal action against such payment for visa activity. This bill will change that. It will make benefits that are asked for, received, offered or provided in return for a migration outcome unlawful—about time. We need to be fair dinkum about addressing fraud in the visa system, so I certainly support the bill. I note that there are other recommendations in the 457 review aimed at restoring the integrity of the 457 visa program which the government has not yet implemented.

I am aware that there is a Senate inquiry into this bill and that it is currently due to report about now. It may be that this bill can be strengthened and made more effective with amendments that go to other aspects of the misuse and abuse of 457 visas. I believe we need to do much more to stem the widespread abuse of 457 visas.

One of the key drivers of intergenerational unfairness is the bringing in of temporary workers from overseas to do work which Australians, and young Australians in particular, should be doing. It is often unfair to the migrant workers themselves. Workplace audits by the Fair Work Ombudsman show that one in five migrant workers in Australia could be underpaid or in jobs they should not be doing. In some cases the workers have been underpaid tens of thousands of dollars. The Fair Work Ombudsman reported in May that in the last three years it has dealt with over 6,000 requests for assistance from migrants on work visas—6,000! They now account for one in every 10 calls to the agency for assistance and have become a major focus for the Fair Work Ombudsman.

At the end of September, Fairfax media reported a joint investigation with Monash University that revealed hundreds of thousands of temporary workers at any given moment were being exploited and underpaid in a widespread black economy for jobs. In food courts, in cafes, in factories, on building sites, in hairdressers and in retail shops right around the nation, hundreds of thousands of temporary workers are being ripped off. A staggering 80 per cent of foreign language advertisements were offering wages below legal rates. Many of them were openly advertised as ‘black’ jobs.

The Liberal government's non-reaction to this widespread abuse was pathetic. Minister Cash said that 'any proposal to regulate the operations of labour hire companies is best driven by the industry'. Industry self-regulation is code for do-nothing. It has manifestly failed to stop the rorts now and it will not succeed in future. The Liberal Party does not care about migrant workers. It wants to bring as many of them as it can into Australia so employers can exploit them. It turns a blind eye to the racism of the free market. It is the rankest hypocrisy and deepest of ironies that causes it to cry 'racism' and 'xenophobia' at the unions and community groups who are doing their best to put a stop to this exploitation.
There is nowhere near enough scrutiny of 457 visas and other migrant worker programs to stop the exploitation of workers or to safeguard Australia’s best interests. In May 2015 the Sunday Age reported that an Italian national was allowed to enter and stay in Australia on a 457 visa despite close family links to an Eastern European crime syndicate that has been under investigation by the Australian Crime Commission and Australian Federal Police. He has since been charged with drug smuggling, rape and indecent assault.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has not made or required background or criminal record checks for the tens of thousands of foreign workers who have entered Australia since the 457 visa program began nearly 20 years ago, in 1996. While applicants must declare whether they have any criminal convictions, the department does no checking. Indeed, the focus has been on ‘deregulating’ and ‘streamlining’ the 457 visa program, meaning the safeguards against abuses are negligible. At the end of May 2015 there were over 106,000 holders of 457 visas in Australia—way too many for the department or the Australian Federal Police to know what they were doing or how they were being treated.

One of many disgraceful temporary migrant worker scams which has attracted recent publicity has been the treatment of workers at the 7-Eleven retail chain. In September, Adele Ferguson and Sarah Danckert in The Age reported that 7-Eleven franchisees were charging staff up to $7,000 to help secure Australian work visas as a sideline revenue stream. I certainly hope that this bill will put an end to such abuses. The Age reported that some franchisees are running as one-stop recruitment shops, providing a steady stream of heavily indentured students and other workers into 7-Eleven stores.

Workers on 457 visas and foreign students are part of the visa factory scam being operated by some 7-Eleven franchisees. The franchisees charge workers anywhere from $25,000 to $70,000 to sponsor them on a visa. Sadly, this is only the first part of the rip-off. Some student visa holders are then enrolled in courses at private training colleges associated with 7-Eleven franchisees. Fairfax reported that one 7-Eleven franchisee is a campus manager of a private college based in the small office of a migration agent above a shop in the Sydney CBD. The franchisee is reported to have offered places in his education courses, which enable the worker to obtain a student visa, for a $40,000 fee.

What is going on is that the student visa holder enrolls in a course at a vocational education institute with links to 7-Eleven franchisees and then works at 7-Eleven or another business run by the 7-Eleven franchisee. The 457 visa holders are sponsored by franchisees to work at the franchisee’s store or another business linked to the franchisee. As is now well known, 7-Eleven has not only been the home of an education scam and a migration scam but also been the home of a workplace scam. Workers have been paid for only half the hours they work, which is of course a breach of 457 visa conditions. Students work more than 20 hours a week, a breach of their visa conditions which causes workers to fear repatriation and keep quiet about their exploitation. This scam was not isolated. Potentially thousands of workers have been underpaid millions of dollars by rogue franchise operators. It is all too clear that the 7-Eleven head office turned a blind eye to these scams until Four Corners exposed them publicly. There was systematic wage exploitation and falsification of payroll records of thousands of workers.

We have indicated our support for the measures in this bill, but we want to highlight that there are potentially further integrity measures in relation to temporary work visas, and
subclass 457 in particular, which could be included as part of this bill. For example, we could see a new sponsor obligation to ensure that the cost to the sponsor of any training contribution cannot be passed on to a 457 visa holder or third party; an obligation that sponsors be required to include as part of their signed employment contract a summary of visa holder rights, prepared by the department, and the Fair Work Ombudsman's *Fair Work Information Statement*; and a change to 457 visa conditions introduced to place an obligation on the visa holder to provide the department with their Australian tax file number. There are additional integrity measures for temporary work visas more generally that I think this parliament should be debating.

In summary, Labor supports this bill but will be considering the findings of the Senate inquiry into this bill and consulting further with stakeholders before the debate in the Senate.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough):** The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**Goods and Services Tax**

**Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (13:29):** When government tax reform is centred around increasing the GST it is a clear sign that the government has lost control of its budget. Even worse, it means that the government has no ideas for genuine tax reform or lacks the political courage to implement real tax reform measures. So the government takes the easy and lazy option of so-called tax reform by increasing the GST, knowing full well that by doing so people on lower incomes will be hit hardest.

Yesterday the Prime Minister skirted around questions about his government's plans to increase the GST during question time by claiming that any tax changes have to be fair. He did not define the term 'fair', which—as we all know—means different things to different people. When it comes to taxation, what I can say to the Prime Minister is that it is not fair to balance your books on the backs of lower income Australians. It is not fair to make lower income people pay extra for essential things like fresh food or medical expenses.

I call on the Prime Minister to make clear his plans and his government's plans about the GST increase and to stop hiding behind statements made by Labor premiers and other political commentators about this issue. The research is out. Clearly, the people at the lower-income end of the scale will pay more under a GST plan. The Prime Minister is the head of this government and the GST buck stops with him.

**Sutherland, Mr Greg**

**Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (13:31):** It is my sad duty to report the recent sudden passing of Greg Sutherland in Mackay. Greg's ill health over a number of years never slowed him down, even when he lost a leg to diabetes. He rolled up his sleeves every day to help people in any way he could. Greg had the admiration and respect of just about everyone in the community. He was most famous for his tireless efforts in delivering a rugby league stadium for Mackay, where the field is now called the Greg Sutherland Oval. He was president of the Mackay and District Rugby League for 13 years, and was instrumental in bringing NRL trial matches to Mackay.
But his impact on the community went far beyond rugby league. He was a Rotarian, passionate about making the world a better place. He was an acknowledged leader of the Australian South Sea Islander community. He was an advocate for the Indigenous community, having set up the Mackay Regional Aboriginal and Islander Development Association. He was passionate for anyone who needed help. I have to say that he as was passionate about jobs, as the director of Skills Training Mackay. In fact, a few days before he died we shared a meal and he talked about his latest idea for a jobs project that he was trying to pitch to me.

Every community needs a Greg Sutherland and the Mackay community is a poorer place for the loss of ours. He will be missed by us all and especially by his widow, Blanche, and by his children.

Goods and Services Tax

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:32): There is nothing fair about a 50 per cent increase to the GST or broadening its base, but members of the coalition opposite are lining up to back it in: senators McGrath, Smith and MacDonald and the members for Leichhardt, Lyne and Wannon along with the member for Goldstein—the Minister for Trade and Investment—who insists that ‘there’s general agreement that the broader the base, the better’. The question is, Minister Robb: better for who?

Modelling suggests that broadening of the base of the GST to include fresh food, for example, would add another $686 per year in costs to the average household. It would add another $251 per year if extended to education, $467 more if extended to health and another $727 for financial services and other items. NATSEM modelling released last week shows that increasing the GST to 15 per cent would hit low-income Australians the hardest, with people in the lowest 20 per cent of income brackets to pay seven per cent more, while people in the highest 20 per cent income bracket would pay just three per cent more.

The Liberals clearly do not understand that people are already struggling to make ends meet to pay bills—including the people in my electorate of Newcastle. Slugging people who can least afford to pay more while letting those who can off the hook is never going to pass the fairness test in Australia. It is just more of the same old unfairness from a supposedly new Liberal Turnbull government.

Calare Electorate: Small Towns

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (13:34): I really enjoy this opportunity to talk about one of the best things in my electorate—that is, what I call ‘small town visits’. Having three cities and two large towns in an electorate, small towns can easily be overlooked. It is something I personally never do. In the last couple of months I have done trips to Black Springs, Jenolan Caves, Hampton and Hartley in the east of my electorate. They are very grateful that we have a black spot phone program and are very grateful that it is ongoing. It is still a big issue in those areas.

In the Central West I have visited Cumnock, Yeoval and Mullion Creek in recent times. In Cumnock, the Rudds are the new proprietors of the store, and they particularly had a lot to say about what is happening in that part of the world. Further west, I visited Cookamidgera, Bogan Gate and Trundle. The thing all of those areas have in common is that communication is a very big thing for them, whether it is the NBN rollout or the black spot program. As I
said, they were all very grateful for the fact that a few months ago we did roll out in my electorate 18 new black spot towers. It makes them realise that, as that program is ongoing, before long—I believe—we will be able to look after all of the people in the Central West of New South Wales in that way, especially in Calare.

**Goods and Services Tax**

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (13:35): Australians have endured, for a number of weeks now, Liberal MPs from right across the country going around our nation and extolling the virtues of increasing the GST and broadening the base of the GST. They cannot tell us, unfortunately, exactly what they want to achieve through tax reform, but they are confident that, whatever the problem may be, a GST increase is the answer. I rise today to say that Labor says, 'No, that is not the answer to the various tax problems that face our system.' One of the reasons for this is very well-understood and well-known by everyone in this chamber—that is, that the GST is a regressive tax. That means that those households on the lowest incomes are going to have to pay the most through that tax. I echo the words of the member for McEwen: it is just unfair.

Yesterday in question time the Prime Minister told us, 'Don't worry, everyone. What we're going to do is compensate low-income households.' Deputy Speaker, tell me: in what alternate universe would you have to be to believe that Australians are going to trust this government to execute a change like this in a way that is fair on the Australian people?

This is a government which, in its first budget, tried to take away all income for unemployed young people for six months, a policy that probably would have left thousands of Australians homeless and without enough food. This is a government which, having promised to make no changes to pensions, has spent two years relentlessly attacking the incomes of pensioners and others who rely on welfare. We do not trust them; neither do Australians.

**Banks Electorate: M5 Motorway**

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (13:37): I rise this afternoon to speak about a very important issue in my electorate—that is, access to the M5 on-ramps at Riverwood. Nearly 20 years ago, the M5 was constructed. At Riverwood it was constructed in such a way that you could enter and exit the M5 if you were travelling in a westerly direction but you could not in an easterly direction and that remains the case today some two decades later. The space is there to open the ramps. It is very frustrating as you drive past and you see the space where the ramps could be opened to allow people access to the city and from the city and it is my very strong view that these ramps should be opened.

Recently, the state government conducted an investigation into the means by which this could be done, the engineering works and so on that would be required. I would very much welcome the conclusion of that process. I look forward to further discussions with the state government. I believe the federal government should support this project. We have to open those M5 ramps at Riverwood. It is something I am very committed to. I look forward to further discussions on this important issue.

**Indi Electorate: Volunteering**

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:38): Colleagues, we all know that rural communities and communities in general thrive because of the work of volunteers. I am delighted to welcome to Parliament House today some wonderful volunteers from Indi, members of Venturer
groups 1st Baranduda, 3rd Wodonga and 1st Bright. Welcome everybody and thank you for your company. Supported by adults Andrew, Brendan, Maree and Trina, they have made the big trip to Canberra. They have been hosted by the Sea Scouts of Lake Burly Griffin and paraded with them last night and they are camping in the scout hall down by the lake. They also visited Government House and the War Memorial yesterday where three of the Venturers, Erin, Tim and Maddie, were invested and Adam had the pleasure of laying a wreath.

They have lots to discuss today including the voting age, access to credit and debit cards for young people and particularly we have been talking about renovation of the Baranduda scout hall. I thank you, young people, for the work you do in your community. We know you make a huge difference and this parliament is very grateful for the role young people play in rural and regional Australia. Thank you for coming today and sharing your time with us. We wish you well in your exams and in your leadership journey ahead. I would particularly encourage my colleagues to offer their support to Venturer Scouts and to Senior Venturers in the work that they do. Thank you.

Recruitment March

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (13:40): In 1915, a group of young men left Gilgandra and marched to Sydney, recruiting men on the way to join the AIF to do their bit to support their country in World War I. Tomorrow, a group of equally dedicated people, who have over the last two weeks been marching from Gilgandra, will reach Sydney. They will have marched up over 600 kilometres. Many of them are direct descendants of the original ‘Coo-ees’, as the group of people were then called, and there are other citizens of Gilgandra marching.

This is a mighty effort. It is a great testament to the original Coo-ees. It is a living memorial 100 years on. I commend these people for marching 650 kilometres in this day and age. They traversed the Blue Mountains through rain in the last week. Many of them are not young. I believe Mr Brian Bywater is in his early 80s and he has marched this distance. I commend them all for it.

Gilgandra is known as the town of the Coo-ees and this march will cement that legacy in remembrance of the last 100 years and will also remind people for the next 100 years.

Taxation

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:42): Apparently, we have been having a tax debate for some weeks. Apparently, everything is on the table, except that the only thing we are hearing in the electorate of Lalor, in my community, is those opposite promoting a 50 per cent increase in the GST—a 50 per cent tax increase! Yesterday we were assured by the Prime Minister that it will be fair, that there will be compensation put in place for low-income earners, who, of course, would bear the brunt of any 50 per cent tax increase. I am going to cut to the chase.

If we were talking about a 50 per cent increase on tax on business, it would be howled down by those opposite. We need to get serious about this. The Prime Minister needs to understand that he is not going to be respected as the arbiter of fair in this country because, like it or lump it, he spent the last two years sitting on those benches bucking in the cruel, unfair 2014 budget. And every Australian saw him do that.
He also has another issue. He has a problem. Where is the superannuation discussion in this taxation debate? Where is the simplification we were promised in the taxation debate? How can you simplify a tax by then having to put in incredibly complex compensation packages? They should forget their rise in the GST.

**Petrie Electorate: Employment**

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (13:43): Job creation is a huge focus for me in my electorate of Petrie. Recently, I had the pleasure of hosting a successful job seekers boot camp in Deception Bay. The boot camp gave local job seekers the opportunity to network with and get career insights from local employers and job providers. Thank you to the 60-plus job seekers who attended, to the MC, Nick Schuster, from Scarborough Physio and Health and to the staff and owners of Mermaid's by the Bay in Deception Bay for providing the venue.

Guest speakers included Mark Hourigan from Packer Leather, Jake Phillpot from TANDA, Deborah Morandin from the Butterfly Experience, Michael Kennedy from Kennedy's Timbers, who made some great contributions, and Radmila Desic from BUSY at Work.

They provided local job seekers with some great tips including look the part, dress will, be punctual, time management is essential, personalise your cover letter and do not give too much away, be honest about your abilities, do not be afraid to cold call and look for part-time work with smaller family owned-businesses employers, give 100 per cent every day and, finally, have the right attitude when you go to work. It was great to see so much positivity in the room. I wish the job seekers all the best. They all have great experience and skills to offer and I am sure they will all do extremely well.

**McEwen Electorate: Goods and Services Tax**

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (13:45): The average weekly income in the electorate of McEwen is under $1,500 a week. A number of families our community are doing it a lot tougher, earning less than $800 a week. Out of that weekly income, whatever it is, money is set aside for groceries, petrol, mortgage, rent and medical expenses, plus the odd incidental that crops up, like school excursions.

These are the people and families who work hard and make the difficult decisions every day to make ends meet. These are the same people who will be hit the hardest if the GST is increased to 15 per cent. These are the same people who can least afford to lose more of their money on income tax. Increasing the GST by 50 per cent and expanding it to cover health, education and fresh food means that families will pay an additional $5,000 a year.

Families are anxious. They are looking around and wondering, where is this money coming from? It is not coming from wage increases. There will not suddenly be a $5,000 bonus or other form of compensation. Liberals just expect Australian families to accept it, to just take the hit.

But I am going to be standing up for the people of McEwen and for all our families, and I am going to be saying we will not take this unfair hit—when other options to increase revenue are taken off the table. If you want to have a discussion on tax reform, let's have it. Let's not just have a discussion about GST. Let's put everything on the table. Let's look at multinational tax evasion. Let's look at high-income superannuation tax breaks. We cannot start a conversation on a subject as important as this with one hand tied behind our backs, which is the starting point from the Abbott-Turnbull government.
2015 Queensland Tennis Awards

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (13:46): Last Saturday I was delighted to be invited to the Queensland Tennis Awards evening and to be invited to present the award for the outstanding school. There were four finalists: Brookfield State School, Rainworth State School, Brisbane Boys College and East Ayr State School. I am not skiting but of course three of those schools are in the electorate of Ryan.

Whilst all were very deserving winners, Brisbane Boys College was successful on the night. I just want to pay tribute to the remarkable improvement to the tennis program at BBC—and particularly their success in recent years. Incredibly, in 2013, 2014 and 2015 they were the Queensland secondary schools team tennis champions, and also in all three years they were GPS first four champions.

In 2014, they won the Australian Secondary School Team Tennis Competition, which were held in November. That made them eligible to travel in July this year to represent Australia at Doha in Qatar for the International School Sport Federation, World Schools Championships, where they finished a very respectable fourth place, only separated by one game from first place. The tournament showcases some of the best young players from across the globe. Teams travelled from England, Germany, Italy, Turkey, France, Belgium, China and Brazil to compete. Australia, represented by BBC, came fourth. Well done, College.

Canberra Electorate: Goods and Services Tax

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:48): I rise today to stand with my colleagues in opposing any changes to the GST. NATSEM modelling shows that an increase in the rate of the GST to 15 per cent would see people in the lowest 20 per cent of income brackets paying seven per cent more, while people in the highest 20 per cent income bracket would pay just three per cent more of their income. This modelling confirms what the Labor Party already knew: any change to the GST will unfairly impact low- and middle-income families the most. So talk of fairness is a complete nonsense. It is something the community understands. I would now like to read a letter I received from Michaela, who lives in my electorate. Michaela writes:

Our family will really struggle if there is an increase in both the depth of the GST (in terms of amount) and breadth (in terms of enveloping all Goods and Services).

Please vote NO to the proposed increase in Goods and Services tax – I have no doubt that from 15% it will grow to 20% and it will be the small retailers, and the middle class and workers who are hurt the worst.

Australia needs to continue to support the people who actually do work, and pay taxes. Malcom Turnbull’s plan to increase the GST—and hurt low- and middle-income earners—shows just how out of touch he is with the cost-of-living pressures facing Australian families. The Labor Party will oppose it and, on behalf of Canberrans, I will also oppose it.

I also want to say quickly say hi to the Venturers who are in the gallery at the moment. Welcome to Canberra. I hope you are having a great time.

Lyne Electorate: National Police Service Medals

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (13:49): The rule of law keeps us safe and makes our society what it is. The police uphold the law and enforce it. At times they put their personal safety on
the line for us. So last week when I attended the Manning-Great Lakes local area police force awards in Taree I was very proud to be giving them due recognition.

Ten National Police Service Medals were awarded. The purpose of the National Police Service Medal is to accord recognition for the unique contribution and significant commitment of those people who have given ethical and diligent services as a sworn member of an Australian police service. So it was with great congratulations that I presented medals to: Detective Chief Inspector Peter McKenna, Sergeant Michael Martin, Sergeant John Broadley, Senior Constable David Abbott, Senior Constable Kurt Wiseman, Senior Constable Lachlan Gunn, former Leading Senior Constable Brian Stewart, former Senior Constable First Class Robert Russell, former Senior Constable Tanya Stegeman, former Senior Constable Graham Bird.

I also congratulate Leading Senior Constable Michael Reid who I presented with the National Medal. The National Medal is awarded for 15 years diligent service and is only awarded after a detailed review of the nominee's service history. Congratulations to all those proud serving and past members of the New South Wales Police Force.

Goods and Services Tax

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (13:51): Many of my colleagues today have been talking about the way a flat tax like a goods and services tax hits hardest in middle- to low-income families. That is very true. I want to talk this afternoon about another disproportionate adverse impact, and that is the effect on those living in rural and regional Australia. Something like eight of the 10 poorest electorates in this country can be found in rural and regional Australia. A recent PwC report found that the gap between the haves and have-nots in the cities and the haves and have-nots in country areas is growing disproportionately again in rural areas. But the key point is that everything we consume in rural and regional Australia involves additional transport costs. This GST will add to those transport taxes. For people in the bush this becomes a tax upon a tax.

When John Howard introduced the GST, he reduced the excise on fuel to offset this effect. Is this government going to reduce the excise further again? In fact, when John Howard introduced the GST, he abolished the wholesale sales tax. What is this government going to do to compensate people generally in this country but particularly those who live in rural and regional Australia? This will have adverse effects right through the bush, including in health services. It is a bad idea and those opposite representing rural seats should reject it.

Adoption

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (13:53): The eighth National Adoption Awareness Week, coordinated by Adopt Change, founded by Deborah Lee Furness, a wonderful, passionate woman, was launched in Parliament House yesterday. Currently around 50,000 children are in out-of-home care in Australia, with more than 15,000 having been in foster care for more than two years, yet only 203 Australian children were adopted last year. Adopt Change aims to raise awareness and advocate for the much-needed reform to the adoption process to provide children with a forever-loving family.

Adopt Change asks us to share 15,000 bedtime stories—one for each Australian child awaiting a permanent loving home. Yesterday's launch included a keynote address advocating for adoption from Sir Martin Narey, who served as a key government adviser on adoption in
the UK. We also heard from a mother of a beautiful adopted daughter about how hard the bureaucratic process was made for her. It is a system designed to discourage would-be adoptive parents.

This issue has long been a passionate concern for me. In 2005 I chaired an inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services into overseas adoptions in Australia. It also looked at the whole culture of adoption and found these exists a strong anti-adoption bureaucracy which impedes adoption as a legitimate way of allowing a loving family to be formed or added to. I am therefore delighted that the Turnbull government yesterday announced a new adoption program for Poland and Latvia and the funding of $3.5 million over four years to help families and children going through the intercountry adoption process.

**Taxation**

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (13:54): Last week the Turnbull government announced a debate on tax, and quicker than a horse out of the gates at Flemington we saw a whole range of backbencher Liberal and National Party MPs keen to get in on the show. We had Captain Courageous, the good doctor from Lyne—I call him courageous because he represents one of the poorest electorates in the country—out there advocating for a 15 per cent increase on the taxes of everything from food to education to health care for the members of his electorate. Not to be outdone was Dangerous Dan, the member for Wannon, who was advocating that he wanted to see the GST extended to financial advice and financial services.

The only thing that was wrong with the debate that was launched by the Prime Minister last week is that it was a debate on tax without a purpose. We on this side of the House know that the purpose of taxation is to raise money to provide the services that the people of Australia expect, but that was not the purpose that was being put by the members on the other side. We had the Treasurer out there saying, 'Don't worry, be happy; just be optimistic,' but nowhere have we had a member on the other side say what it is going to mean to health care, the cost of fresh food and those people who can afford it least. That is why we will be opposing these GST changes.

**Page Electorate: Pink Halloween**

Mr HOGAN (Page) (13:56): I would like to thank everyone involved in the Jodie's Inspiration Pink Halloween fundraiser at Trinity on Saturday, 31 October. It was a great night with a fantastic community atmosphere. The night was opened by the flash mob, and I apologise now and humbly for my rendition of the Rock Horror time warp dance. Over 600 people turned up and over $100,000 was raised—a magnificent achievement in one fundraiser. The cold-cap therapy machine has now been ordered and Jodie is talking with Lismore Base Hospital about the purchase of other equipment.

I thank Jodie McCrae for the positive force she is in our community. I would also like to thank the committee of Jodie’s Inspiration: Reece Smith, her partner; Jessie Smith; Betty-Anne Durheim; Kym Latta; Tanya Jones; Michelle Mitchell; Denis and Barbra Dardengo; Leanne Sommerville; Amanda Parsons; Trudi Blanch; Annette Goulding; Kylie Drew; Jill Wray; Greg and Belinda Hickey; and, importantly, her children, Kaela and Jake.
Major sponsors for the night who helped make it happen were the Bank of Queensland Lismore, Hurfords Hardwood, Coastal Scales and Registers, helloworld Lismore City, Marist Brothers Rugby League Football Club plus many others who turned up to meetings and working bees. Thank you Jodie and everyone involved in Jodie’s Inspiration.

**Taxation**

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (13:57): Australia faces some significant economic challenges right now: growth sitting below trend, inequality at a 75-year high and housing affordability increasingly being pushed out of reach for young Australians. And yet the government’s answer to tax reform—raising the GST—makes none of these problems better and all of them worse.

We know from the government’s own Re:think paper that the GST is no more efficient than the income tax. Indeed, the Re:think tax paper says that if you raise $5 of revenue then you destroy $1 of economic activity through the income tax and that if you raise $5 of GST you then destroy $1 of economic activity.

But, while the GST is no more efficient than the income tax, it is certainly less equitable. NATSEM modelling suggests that a 15 per cent GST would cost seven per cent of disposable income for the poorest households but just three per cent for the richest households. That is because more affluent Australians have higher savings rates while lower income Australians are tending to borrow. If we really want serious tax reform, we need reforms such as those that Labor has put on the table: getting rid of loopholes, fairly taxing multinationals and fairly taxing superannuation. The government has now kicked off its tax reform agenda to the third year of this government, showing it is not serious about tax reform.

**Whitewater Rafting World Championships**

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (13:59): One year ago, five schoolgirls from Cairns beat teams from Brazil and Russia to win the under-19 world championship in whitewater rafting. On 27 November they leave for Indonesia to defend this title. Lucy Edington-Chapman, Carina Nixon, Gabriella Brinks, Layla Bitolkoski, Maddi Brittain and the team captain, Stephanie Seed, are training eight times a week in their bid to ensure that the world championship title remains in Cairns. These girls are quite incredible. I had the pleasure of meeting them last year when they returned from Brazil. Their dedication was impressive—not just to getting to the competition but also to training and fundraising beforehand.

In Indonesia, they will face four events: a quick-time sprint challenge, a physical knockout head-to-head, a technical slalom course, and a downriver marathon event. There is no doubt that this is an extreme sport. The girls have to be continually at the top of their game to avoid flipping and being caught under rocks and in dangerous currents. Safety always comes first, but good teamwork and communication is paramount when making split-second decisions. Their success is evidence of this, as well as of the guidance from their coach, Wagner Torres. I wish the girls all the very best in bringing the world championship back to Cairns for the second time. They have done an outstanding job in their chosen sport. *(Time expired)*

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

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:01): I inform the House that the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister for Human Services will be absent from question time for the remainder of the week as he is attending Remembrance Day commemorations overseas. The Minister for Foreign Affairs will answer questions on the Veterans’ Affairs portfolio and the Minister for Social Services will answer questions on the Human Services portfolio.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Goods and Services Tax

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:01): My question is to the Leader of the House, who is responsible for the government’s legislative program. Can the Leader of the House confirm that he has no intention of bringing any legislation into the House which would raise the price of everything by increasing the GST to 15 per cent? Are the reports true? Has he fixed it?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (14:01): That is a remarkably juvenile question from a remarkably juvenile opposition. They are practising old politics and finding it very hard to get a handle on this government, which is striking out in new directions and offering new hope and optimism to the Australian public, to business and to consumers every day through the policies it is implementing. On this side of the House, we are absolutely determined to focus on jobs and to focus on growth. We are doing that through innovation in my own portfolio, through trade in the portfolios of the foreign minister and the Minister for Trade, through infrastructure in the Deputy Prime Minister’s portfolio, and through agriculture in the Minister for Agriculture’s portfolio.

Australians are tremendously uplifted by the boost the Prime Minister has given to optimism and confidence in the economy, in the jobs market and in growth in Australia today. It is a remarkable turnaround. Yet we see the opposition continuing to practise their sad old politics. They think a not-very-scary scare campaign on tax is going to turn around their fortunes.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr PYNE: I see the junior woodchucks doing all the shouting. They tend to do that when they sense a leadership change coming. That has been my experience over the last 22 years. My experience has been that the junior woodchucks get very shouty when they feel a leadership change coming because they want to impress the other pretenders on the frontbench with how good they are—they want to get on the frontbench if the leadership changes.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr PYNE: The member for Melbourne Ports knows exactly what I am talking about. His days of being shouty are well and truly over, it must be said. He has become very boutique, the member for Melbourne Ports. But other younger members of the opposition are very shouty because they are trying to impress the people’s choice over here, the shadow Treasurer, and others who might want to seek to replace the member for Maribyrnong.
The government of course have all issues on the table, because we are a mature government. Of course we are talking about things to do with taxation—and the economy and growth and jobs—because the Australian public expects a mature political discourse. This opposition are not up to a mature political discourse. That is the sadness of it and that is why they are being marked down by the Australian public and will continue to be until they start to focus on substantial policy discussion.

**Economy**

**Mr WHITELEY** (Braddon—Government Whip) (14:04): By contrast, my important question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister outline to the House what steps the government is taking to grow the economy and generate jobs? Why is it important to open up new opportunities for Australian businesses to export into large and growing markets such as China?

**Mr TURNBULL** (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:05): I thank the honourable member for his question. He has been a passionate supporter of the great Tasmanian export industries. I was visiting with him only last week in Tasmania. In Devonport we went to a dairy manufacturer, Fonterra, which is already seeing its exports, Tasmanian milk products, increasing due to the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. The enabling legislation for that free trade agreement, as we know, passed through the Senate last night. Not only is that agreement resulting in significant formal reductions in trade barriers; it amounts to essentially a *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval on Australia and Australian exports from the Chinese government. It is of enormous influence right across the board. Long before formal cuts in tariffs come into effect, the benefits are being seen right across the board.

This is the best free trade agreement China has made with any country—across goods, services and investment. These free trade agreements that the Minister for Trade and Investment, Mr Robb, has negotiated with the world's largest and most dynamic economies in East Asia are key to the government's strategy to lay the foundations for our future prosperity. This is why the opportunities for Australians and Australian businesses have never been greater. This is why there has never been a better time to be an Australian, never been a better time to get on with Australian enterprise and take on and tackle those enormous markets.

Everything this government is doing has the objective of growing our economy. Every measure we undertake, every measure we contemplate, every measure we consult upon or listen to has one focus only—that is, to drive jobs and growth and ensure that we have in the future a high-wage, generous social welfare net, First World economy. An economy that is as fair as it is prosperous; an economy that offers the greatest opportunities and the widest horizons to all Australians, and particularly to all enterprising Australians. That is why we are spending so much on infrastructure. That is why we are considering and discussing with the state governments the recommendations of the Harper review. Right across the board, economic progress, coupled with fairness, is the objective of this government. That is where we are, which is in a very contrasting position to Labor. Theirs is just one feeble scare campaign after another; one embarrassing abandonment of economic integrity after another, particularly from our good friend the member for Fraser, who has to eat every word he has ever written.
DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The Speaker (14:08): I wish to inform the House we have present in the gallery this afternoon the Premier of Tasmania, the Hon. Will Hodgman. On behalf the House, I extend a warm welcome.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Goods and Services Tax

Mr Bowen (McMahon) (14:08): Mr Speaker, my question is to the Treasurer. I refer to reports that the minister for innovation reassured nervous coalition MPs that the government would in fact not jack up the GST. Will the Treasurer join his senior cabinet colleague and rule out raising the price of everything by increasing the GST to 15 per cent?

Mr Pyne: Old politics!

Mr Morrison (Cook—Treasurer) (14:08): I thank the member for his question. I agree with the minister for innovation that the story was complete rubbish, because that is what he said.

Opposition members: He didn't say that!

Mr Morrison: That is exactly what he said if you read the article. It was completely dismissed. As usual, what we have from the opposition is a complete lack of respect for the Australian people. Those opposite want to treat the Australian people as mugs. They do not think that the Australian people are capable of having a genuine discussion in this country about how we can grow jobs and how we can grow the economy, but that is the discussion, that is the focus that those on this side of the House are having. We are having a discussion about how we grow jobs and how we grow the economy. What those opposite are engaged in is just the usual old, cynical politics: rule-in rule-out fear campaigns—all of those things.

Ms Butler interjecting—

Mr Morrison: They cannot break out of that mould! On this side of the House, under the Prime Minister's leadership, we are moving on with the plan for jobs and growth in our economy, and those opposite just have little, little faith in the Australian people.

Ms Butler interjecting—

Mr Morrison: They have so little faith in the Australian people they do not think that Australians can hold more than one idea in their heads at any one time. That may be true for many of those opposite, but it certainly is not true of the Australian people. We know that, and we respect those who we are engaging with to ensure that we can grow jobs and grow our economy.

The Speaker: Just before I call the member for Petrie, the member Griffith was continually interjecting. We are not going to take up from where we left off yesterday. She is warned.

Employment

Mr Howarth (Petrie) (14:10): Mr Speaker, my question is to the Treasurer. How is the government's national platform for economic growth and jobs backing Australians to
work, save and invest? Will the Treasurer please update the House on the latest OECD report on positive signals within the Australian economy?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:11): I thank the member for Petrie for his question and his strong interest in growing jobs and growing our economy, particularly in his electorate. Overnight the OECD once again indicated that global conditions for global economic growth remained tough. They do. And while we cannot control what happens in the global economy, we can control what our own policy settings are here at home—to support jobs and to support growth. This is what we are doing, with our strong national platform for jobs and growth in the Australian economy. We are focusing on the issues that will enable that growth. And the OECD said that our economic policy priorities, that what we are doing in terms of proposing structural reforms, adds to what they describe as 'upside risks', which means they are good for the economy. The OECD is saying that what we are doing to address the real reforms, the real changes that improve our economic performance are good for the economy.

The OECD are forecasting for Australia to return to trend growth. That is what they are forecasting. They are forecasting, and have confirmed, that in the last year our economy grew at more than the OECD average, and it grew at more than twice the rate of commodities-based economies like Canada. And that is in the face of what the Reserve Bank governor said very clearly is as intense headwinds as they are likely to get. So in the face of those very intense headwinds, our economy is growing.

But they said more. They said there have been positive signals on business confidence, on profits and credit growth in the non-resource sectors. They said unemployment will begin to trend downwards as rebalancing the economy towards noncommodity sectors continues. The OECD described the initiatives underway to strengthen infrastructure as 'welcome', and they support the government's focus on fiscal repair, stating that 'medium-term fiscal planning must remain strongly committed to putting the debt to GDP ratio on a downward track', which is what this government is doing. We will not be doing it by raising taxes; we will be doing it by growing the economy and controlling expenditure. It is those opposite who believe you balance a budget by making sure your revenue is higher than your expenditure. On this side of the House we seek to do it by ensuring that expenditure is less than the revenue.

The OECD also supports the government's focus on improving Australia's tax system, saying it would 'significantly improve'. It says the focus on the tax system would 'significantly improve the growth friendliness of Australia's tax system'. That is what we are about: working with the states and territories, working with the various groups that are out there to support strong growth in jobs and our economy, and a better tax system that does not put a higher burden on Australians, but it releases them and removes the impediments in the tax system to support growth and jobs, which is what we are about. (Time expired)

Goods and Services Tax

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:14): Mr Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to the Treasurer's previous answer. Can the Prime Minister please explain how exactly will jacking up the GST to 15 per cent grow Australian jobs and the Australian economy?
Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:14): The Leader of the Opposition leads a party that comes with a rather undistinguished record in fiscal management. The Howard government left office with $44 billion of cash in the bank—a net negative debt. Labor left office six years later with net debt of $202 billion.

Mr Burke: I rise on a point of order on direct relevance. This is suspiciously old-style regressive politics.

The SPEAKER: The member for Watson will resume his seat. The member for Watson does not have the call. The Prime Minister is 30 seconds into his answer.

Mr Danby interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Melbourne Ports is warned.

Mr TURNBULL: The simple, fiscal facts are: we left office with $44 billion cash in the bank. Labor left office with net debt of $202 billion. For every additional dollar in revenue, they spent two dollars. From the measures that have been announced so far, Labor would blow the budget bottom line by nearly $55 billion—a $55 billion dollar blackhole.

The honourable member asked me about GST. There is a debate going on about tax and about GST—about all taxes, state and federal taxes. Honourable members will be familiar with the tax discussion paper released by the government in March this year—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield is warned.

Mr TURNBULL: which was designed to promote an open discussion about our tax system and that is what has been going on. But Labor is afraid of that. It does not want to engage in any discussion.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: It wants to shut it down. Its method of engagement—taking the interjection by the member for Isaacs—is to shut down any discussion and call on the government to rule out taking any action on any of the issues canvassed in the discussion paper published in March. In other words, having started an informed discussion on tax, the opposition want us to shut it down. Why would they want us to do that? They are afraid of confronting the real fiscal mess that they have left us. They are afraid of confronting the fact that there are elements in our tax system that are profoundly unhelpful to strong economic growth. Bracket creep is seeing Australians on average earnings move into the second-highest tax bracket. That is not right. I do not think anybody here thinks that is right. Isn't that a problem that we should address? Isn't that an issue that we should be talking about? Well, of course, it is. As the honourable Treasurer said a moment ago, the OECD—which I noticed the member for Rankin used to have a very high regard for at one point—says that one of the upsides, potential for Australia to outperform, is the prospect of structural reform such as in taxation. So the OECD agrees with the government, but the Labor Party is out on a limb of its own. (Time expired)

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide will cease interjecting. The member for Rankin has been asked not to interject a number of times. He is now warned as well.
Northern Australia

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (14:18): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. Since the northern loans plan's $50 million requirement eliminates northerners, it will stop the northern beef on-farm irrigation plan, worth $6 billion a year. And since the government's largesse—according to The Australian Financial Review on Monday—goes to Darwin port owners, Wilmar Sugar and JBS Swift—all monopolistic foreign corporations with plantation farming, foreign fly-ins, contractors and mill workers—what benefit is this to Australia?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (14:18): In order to assist the member for Kennedy, I think it might be better if he were to direct that question to the Minister for Agriculture rather than the Minister for Trade and Investment, since it is a question about the northern Australia white paper.

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:19): I thank the honourable member for his question. It is a proper question, and I acknowledge the great work that the member has done over such a long period of time, representing the people of northern Australia in the great seat of Kennedy.

What a great turnaround this government has brought about, best seen, of course, by the record prices we are currently getting in cattle. I see that lately we are loading cattle from the North for up to $3.40 to $3.60 bracket. This is the sort of money that brings a real difference to people's lives, that brings real dignity into their lives. This is the sort of money that brings the capacity for people of the North, like anywhere else, to have the spare cash so that they can renovate their kitchens, buy themselves a new car, go on holidays and live with a dignity in their life—which would be expected of people who are doing so much in, some instances, hard terrain and remoteness. But it does not just stop there. There is so much that we envisage to do.

We have, at this point in time, spoken to the states. The states are now getting back to us about the $50 million and the feasibility for the construction of new dams. We have, around Australia, a further $450 million that is sitting in behind that, so that we can go forward on projects that have been suggested to us, such as stage 3 of the Ord, such as the Nullinga Dam—I know that up at Warren Vale, up in the North, they are owned by Stanbroke up there. They have a big irrigation project that they are trying to get underway there, and, even on that, we are looking at a turnaround from about 150,000 kilograms of beef per year to over four million kilograms of beef per year, just off that place alone. This is the sort of remarkable turnaround that we can produce not only for the people of Kennedy but also for the people of Australia. This is the return not only to Cloncurry but also to Collins Street as well. This is happening under this government.

But it does not just stop there. We have seen the money that we have put aside for the beef roads. We acknowledge that to try and drive this industry forward we have to have 24-hour access so that we can get from the property to the port. We are now seeing, soon, I believe, that Townsville will become the biggest loading spot for live cattle, and it needs to be attached to that 24-hour access.

It is not just there. We have seen through the white paper the process that has happened with the 100 per cent write-off on water reticulation; in the re-fencing of a lot of those areas
and some of the Indigenous lands areas, a 100 per cent write-off for fencing; and a write-off over three years for fodder storage.

We know that our vision is in the North. We know that we have a plan for the North. I absolutely commend the member for Kennedy for this question because we can see that we are absolutely delivering for the North.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:22): I inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon Mr John Haslem, a former member for Canberra. On behalf of the House, I extend a very warm welcome to him.

I also inform the House that we have present this afternoon Mr Pontzeele, head of the Belgian War Graves Office with the Belgian national institute of veterans affairs. On behalf of the House, I also give him a very warm welcome.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Trade with China

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (14:22): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister please update the House on how the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement would increase two-way traffic between China and Australia, improving jobs and creating more growth?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:23): I thank the honourable member for her question. There is no doubt at all that the Australia-China Free Trade Agreement provides a world-class framework for an economic relationship between Australia and China into the future. What it will also mean, of course, is much more travel between Australia and China.

In that context, it is exciting to note that in September, for the first time, China, including Hong Kong, became Australia’s No. 1 tourist market. More people came to Australia on short-term visits from China than from any other country, overtaking New Zealand for the first time. This demonstrates how strong and important the relationship that Australia has with China is going to be in the years ahead. Seven point two five million tourists came to Australia in the last 12 months—a record and over a million more than when this government came to office. So our efforts in promoting Australia as a market by providing world-class facilities for the industry are bearing fruit.

It is particularly significant to note that, immediately after the signing of the free trade agreement, Australia entered into a new air services agreement with China. That too was a landmark agreement. It will enable the Chinese airlines to essentially triple their services to Australia over the years ahead. There are a large number of Chinese carriers that have expressed an interest in coming to Australia or are already starting new services and in fact boosting the number of people who are able to travel between our countries. But it is not just Chinese airlines. I was excited to read and to learn that Jetstar are beginning services from Wuhan to the Gold Coast on 787 aircraft—direct tourism between China and the Gold Coast. So there are going to be real benefits to the entire Australian tourism industry as a result of this closer relationship with China.
Of course, that is going to mean new facilities in Australia. It was a pleasure to be with the member for Ryan for the opening of the new upgraded Brisbane international terminal just last week. There is work happening, obviously, in other terminals as well: the new T4 terminal in Melbourne; T1, a new pier for Perth Airport; and work on runways in Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane.

These sorts of things demonstrate that our airlines and our aviation infrastructure are preparing for rapid growth in our tourist industry. We expect to have 1½ million tourists here next year. China will be the biggest market for those visitors, but all of them are contributing to building a stronger Australian economy, with $13 billion expected next year. (Time expired)

**Goods and Services Tax**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:26): My question is to the Prime Minister. Over the last 10 years, the cost of fruit has risen by 43 per cent. The cost of vegetables has risen by 34 per cent. So, in the interests of open debate, Prime Minister, why exactly is your government now contemplating a 15 per cent price rise in fresh food in Australia?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:27): The honourable member should recall that the leading advocate of a 15 per cent GST on a broader base is in fact the Labor Premier of South Australia.

**Trade with China**

Ms PRICE (Durack) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister advise the House on the benefits that the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement will bring to the Australian economy as a result of its early passage through parliament?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:27): I thank the member for Durack for her question. She well knows the important role that the mining and energy sector plays in her electorate. In Western Australia last year, China accounted for over 50 per cent of the state's exports, bringing almost $65 billion into the Western Australian economy, and two-thirds of these exports were from the resources sector. What makes the Western Australian economy stronger makes the Australian economy stronger.

There is an air of optimism and confidence across Australia because business and consumers can grasp the enormity of the opportunities that await this country from the signing of the free trade agreements, including the China FTA. When the China free trade agreement enters into force, around 93 per cent of resources, energy and manufacturing products from Australia will enter China duty free. Existing zero tariffs on iron ore, gold and LNG will now be locked in at zero. Other tariffs on alumina, refined copper and alloys, coking coal, zinc, nickel and the like will be eliminated. This means that Australian commodity exports will be even more competitive in the Chinese market. We are in a highly competitive global market. This deal will increase the international competitiveness of Australian resource, energy and manufacturing products.

The passage of the China free trade agreement this year is significant because, should entry into force occur this year, it will allow Australian businesses to receive two rounds of tariff cuts in quick succession, the first on entry into force and the second on 1 January 2016. This will help place Australian businesses and Australian exporters at the head of the pack.
This is a huge deal. As Brendan Pearson, the CEO of the Minerals Council of Australia said:

The trade agreement is a watershed moment in Australia's economic history. Together with the trade agreements with Japan and Korea, ChAFTA will anchor the Australian economy in East Asia for many decades to come and will provide increased opportunity and prosperity for future generations of Australians.

So the government has recognised the opportunities that lie to our north. We have acted by concluding these three free trade agreements that combined provide Australian exporters with access to a market of over 1.5 billion people.

In summary, the China free trade agreement gives better access to our largest export market, a greater competitive advantage, greater opportunity for two-way investment and reduced costs for imports. This means more jobs for the Australian people.

**Goods and Services Tax**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:30): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to his previous answer. The Prime Minister has said that he wants the government to have a conversation with Australians about tax, including the GST. How can Australians possibly have a national conversation with the government if the Prime Minister refuses to answer our questions in the national parliament?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:31): Mr Speaker, it is hard to keep him happy! He is unhappy when I speak for three minutes and he is even less happy when I speak for 30 seconds. So I will give you three minutes, Bill!

The honourable member would be well aware that the tax system needs to raise the money that government requires, but it needs to do so in a way—

*Mr Champion interjecting—*

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield has been warned!

Mr TURNBULL: that imposes the least break on economic activity—so, it distorts economic activity as little as possible.

Some taxes, such as transaction taxes—like stamp duties—are obviously very distorting because they discourage trade. That is why years ago the states took off the stamp duty on share transactions—the stamp duty there. And, of course, the very large stamp duties on property transactions discourage trade in real estate transactions. Income tax, which is progressive, is very important, because it is the largest source of revenue. Also, because of it being progressive, it means that the burden of tax is carried disproportionately in accordance with income. So those with the highest incomes pay more of the tax, because they can best afford it. That is understood.

The GST itself is a very efficient tax. It is widely regarded as such, and is regarded as such by just about any economist and, of course, just recently by the OECD. The problem with the GST, of course, is that it affects households with lower incomes—

Ms Butler: And middle incomes!

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith has been warned!

Mr TURNBULL: because they will spend a larger proportion of their income on goods and services that are subject to the GST. So its advantage is its efficiency—it does not distort
economic activity. Its disadvantage is that it is seen to be regressive, although it is fair to say that recent studies indicate that it is not as regressive as was once thought years ago. But, nonetheless, we accept that it has a certain regressive nature. It is not a progressive tax, like income tax.

Therefore, there have always been advocates for having less of our tax revenue—'our' being all governments—levied from personal income tax, from direct taxes, and more from an indirect tax, a GST, or VAT or call it what you will. The challenge with a GST or a VAT is to ensure that lower-income households are properly compensated. That was clearly part of the design in 2001. It was part of Labor's own government design when they imposed a similar broad-based tax on energy—the carbon tax. And, of course, if there were to be in the future any change to the GST, equity and fairness would be absolutely foremost.

**Agriculture**

*Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (14:34):* My question is to the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. Will the minister update the House on the implementation of the coalition government's white paper on agricultural competitiveness and how it is helping to build a stronger Australian economy?

*Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:34):* I would like to thank the honourable member for his question. It is a great pleasure to get a question from the gentleman with whom I went to the top of the Comboyne Plateau not that long ago. We did not get to meet Moses on the top of the mountain but we certainly did meet Rodney Fisher, who is a rather remarkable person with a handshake that would just about crush any other living being!

What is really important also is that we say clearly to the people, especially in the agricultural economy, what this government is delivering. There was 9.7 per cent growth for the year ending 30 June 2014—agricultural and rural exports had grown by that amount. Rural exports grew a further seven per cent to 30 June 2015, and in the first quarter of the 2015-16 year, in comparison to the first quarter of the previous year, they are up 12.3 per cent. So often the opposition asks questions about revenue. We actually deliver the answers; we actually deliver the outcomes that have our nation earn more money.

But I am very excited about the work that we are doing, especially around the white paper—especially around dams. We have a great vision for dams—a great vision for dams in stage 3 of the Ord; for the feasibility study for an Alinga dam; and for the resource assessments of the Mitchell River catchments. These are all part of a $50 million tranche of money which will roll out, followed by a further $450 million, as this nation has a better place to be. This nation still has the vision, this nation still has the requirements and this nation is still brave enough to build dams. And we will build dams.

It is also through the white paper that we saw work on issues such as country-of-origin labelling, which is vitally important for selling to the people of Australia and overseas the importance of our product. We are so incessant about having the best product. We have a quality product.

If we go away from there, we have also seen—and we saw up on the Comboyne Plateau—the money that has been delivered and what the outcomes are by reason of a 100 per cent write-off on water reticulation so that people can upgrade their water infrastructure. It did not
matter whether it was with dairy—the work we are doing in dairy. I am glad that ChAFTA has now made it through the Senate, so ChAFTA is now in place, and I would like to congratulate the absent trade minister for the work that he has done there. But this is all part of the process of how we have a vision—a strong vision—for people on the land, where we can actually show the figures that we are delivering greater export income for our nation and that we are actually going to continue this work on as we roll out further in dams, further in research and development, further in fencing and further in water reticulation. I think that ultimately it is the coalition that is going to provide a better outcome for the nation in total.

Goods and Services Tax

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:37): My question is to the Prime Minister and refers to his previous answer, in which he referred to fairness. Prime Minister, what is fair about cutting the family tax benefits of 1½ million Australian families and then raising the price of everything by jacking up the GST to 15 per cent?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:38): I thank the honourable member for her question. I have answered, in my previous answer, the question about GST, I believe. Fairness, in any—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: I would urge the honourable member to consider the issue of equity in a value-added tax. It is a very, very important issue. It is important to remember. For example, the Leader of the Opposition has spoken about—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: The opposition wants to have a discussion about tax. Let's have a discussion. The honourable member talks about the GST exemption on fresh food, for example. It is important to remember that, just as the cost of GST on goods that are subject to it does not discriminate or differentiate between the income of a particular person who buys a washing machine or a service—something that is subject to GST—so the exemption benefits everybody, whether they are a wealthy person buying fresh food or a person on a low income. So the fact is, whether it is goods that are taxed with GST or goods that are free from GST, invariably there is a regressive element in it. The extent of that regression is a matter of some controversy among economists, and it is generally accepted it is not as bad or as big as it was once thought to be, but nonetheless it is plain that in any tax of that kind—whether it is a GST, broad based or narrow based, or whether it is a carbon tax, as the honourable member's government had when they were in office—there needs to be compensation to ensure that that regressive element in the tax does not disadvantage households on lower incomes. So fairness is absolutely critical in any discussion of tax.

Our tax system, broadly speaking, is fair; it distributes the burden substantially on the basis of income. But it also has to be efficient, because, you see, while an income tax is progressive and people pay more tax as they earn more money, as they move up through the tax brackets there is an increasing disincentive to work, save and invest, because more of the income is being taken by the government. So getting the balance right is vital, and getting fairness is absolutely vital.

Opposition members interjecting—
Mr TURNBULL: It is interesting: whenever we move to talking about the substance of tax, the opposition stop listening. They only want to shout, as the Leader of the House said right at the outset.

Vocational Education and Training

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (14:41): My question is to the Minister for Vocational Education and Skills. Peta, a 22-year-old from my electorate of Dobell, recently completed an inquiry form from a vocational education provider who approached her in a local shopping centre about education opportunities. Peta later received a letter saying she was now enrolled in a course and was required to pay a substantial amount of money as soon as possible. Will the minister please update the House on how the government is introducing legislative changes to stop this misleading and illegal practice being undertaken by some vocational education providers?

Opposition members interjecting—

Mrs McNAMARA: How are the numbers going, Pat?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members will cease interjecting. The minister has the call.

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Minister for Vocational Education and Skills and Deputy Leader of the House) (14:41): I thank the good member for her question, and I am concerned to hear about her constituent being misled into signing up for a particular course of study. Unfortunately, we saw too much of this behaviour as a result of Labor's failures when it made changes to the VET FEE-HELP scheme. That is why we acted swiftly to stamp out these behaviours and restore the integrity of the VET FEE-HELP system. That is why we banned the payment of inducements, to prevent students being duped into signing up for a course; that is why we banned withdrawal fees, which prevented students from withdrawing from a course; that is why we banned misleading statements, such as claiming that a particular course was free or government funded when everybody knows that they are not; and that is why we introduced rules so that students were not hit with an up-front course fee. Rather, now those course fees are accrued during the life of the course, a much more equitable outcome.

We have before the House a bill which provides additional protections for students, greater protections for those under the age of 18, and a two-day cooling-off period to prevent high pressure sales tactics.

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley is now warned.

Mr HARTSUYKER: The bill requires that students have the necessary educational prerequisites before they enter into a course.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will cease interjecting.

Mr HARTSUYKER: It is vital as we go forward that we have a strong and vibrant VET sector that delivers quality training to the people of Australia and helps them into jobs. Today I had the pleasure of releasing the total VET activity report with Professor Shergold, which shows clearly the strength and size of the VET sector. One in four Australians of working age
are participating in VET, some 3.9 million Australians. VET makes a massive contribution to this nation, and that is why the government has acted—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will cease interjecting.

Mr HARTSUYKER: to restore the integrity of the VET FEE-HELP program. I certainly thank the members opposite for their support of the bill before the House, but I will ask my department to investigate the concerns of the member for Dobell, and I will report back to her so that she can pass that on to her constituent. I encourage anyone who feels that they have been misled into signing up for a course or they have been the subject of pressure tactics by a training provider to certainly contact the complaints hotline. We are about a quality VET sector that meets the needs of Australians and helps them into jobs.

Mr Burke: Point of order.

The SPEAKER: No, the minister—

Mr Dutton interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I have not called anyone yet. The minister for Immigration and Border Protection will not interject.

Mr HARTSUYKER: I have concluded.

Mr Dutton: He has finished his answer.

The SPEAKER: The minister for immigration will not interject.

Mr Burke: Under standing order 1, we are willing to provide leave for him to finish reading out what he had typed up.

The SPEAKER: Member for Watson, that is a frivolous point of order. I have warned members about frivolous points of order.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley has been warned!

Goods and Services Tax

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (14:45): My question is to the Prime Minister. Single parents in Parramatta, in my electorate, with an income of $55,000 and two teenagers will lose $4,700 every year because of the Prime Minister's unfair cuts to family tax benefits. How is it fair to ask this family to then pay $3,700 more each year by jacking up the GST?

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (14:46): With respect to that figure that was cited of $4,700, that does two things that it should not do. First of all, it does not take into account any of the availability leading up to the point at which a child would turn 13, because of reforms that we are suggesting to child care which would make families $1,500 a week better off—

Mr Burke: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance. People who are—

The SPEAKER: The member for Watson will resume his seat. The member for Watson is abusing the right of a point of order. The minister is 30 seconds into his answer. He is completely relevant. I am warning members on both sides—

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

CHAMBER
The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney is warned! The member for Sydney will not interject when I am making a ruling. She might be the deputy leader but it makes no difference. It is disorderly conduct.

Mr Dutton interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The minister for immigration will cease interjecting. I am going to refer all members to the practice that I have referred to before where Speakers in the past have been prepared to rule on a point of order immediately and, if there are continued frivolous points of order, to not hear it at all.

Mr PORTER: The other thing that that figure—

Mr Bowen interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon is warned!

Mr PORTER: does it takes into account the abolition of the schoolkids bonus. That was meant to be paid for by the something called the 'mining tax' which raised no revenue. Are the opposition seriously suggesting that we should borrow money, in a period of debt and deficit, to pay for a schoolkids bonus at this time? It is absolutely a bogus figure. I might make the other point here that when the coalition came to government we inherited from Labor the five worst deficits in Australian history, totalling $191 billion. That was compounded by a further $123 billion in projected cumulative deficits between 2013-14 and 2016-17. The prediction from Treasury was that if we did not take remedial action, which involves finding savings and restraining expenditure, then we were looking down the barrel of 10-plus years of deficits—

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta is warned!

Mr PORTER: I might say, with respect to this issue of fairness, the opposition today have agreed to at least one small part of the savings package that we have proposed—half a billion dollars. They believe that that is completely fair and we would agree that that is a fair saving. But when you consider the borrowings that are engaged in to fund things that we cannot restrain today, such as in family tax benefits B or in a whole range of other areas inside the welfare system, if we allow the situation to persist for too long where we are borrowing money to fund the—

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga is warned!

Mr PORTER: current expenditure then the children that you are talking about who are 13 today—

Mr Bowen interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon is warned! That is his final warning.

Mr PORTER: when they enter the tax system will end up not merely paying for the welfare system in the future of their own day; they will end up paying through the contribution of their taxes to the welfare system of today because we have been unable as a parliament to determine appropriate savings. The interesting thing about your position, members opposite, is that while you have—and we are thankful that you have—agreed to at
least some of the expenditure restrain that we propose, I note at the end of your media release, Member for Parramatta, you say that you would:

…continue to investigate fair ways of ensuring our Family Tax Benefits system remains targeted to those who need it most.

That is very strong: 'investigating fair ways'. The reality is we must restrain expenditure in this area. We have our suggestions on the table. You have agreed with at least a small part of those but there must be more, and if you have suggestions what are they?

**Broadband**

**Mr ENTSCH** (Leichhardt) (14:50): My question is to the Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects representing the Minister for Communications. The Whyanbeel community group has been in regular contact with my office because residents and businesses in this area experience very poor internet connectivity. Can the minister please update my constituents as to the progress of the NBN in their area?

**Mr FLETCHER** (Bradfield—Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects) (14:50): I am very pleased to receive that question from the member for Leichhardt, who is a very strong advocate for the needs of his community on a whole range of issues, including the desirability of good internet connectivity. The area that he refers to is one which has not had good internet connectivity—

*Dr Chalmers interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Rankin has been warned!

**Mr FLETCHER:** And despite the extraordinary extent of promises made by the previous government—the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government—we saw a disappointing lack of delivery when it came to the provision of internet services under the NBN in regional and remote areas, including those in the member's electorate of Leichhardt such as Whyanbeel.

As you would know, the story in relation to fixed wireless nationally is a very good one. When we came to government only a bit over 40,000 premises were able to connect to fixed wireless. It is now over 300,000 and well on track to half a million. Half a million premises in due course will be able to connect to fixed wireless.

In the member's electorate of Leichhardt, where he has been a very, very strong advocate for the connectivity needs of his constituents, there is very good progress being made. I am pleased to report to the House that base stations are under construction, which will provide coverage to Whyanbeel. Already there is a base station operational at Newell Beach and, by the end of this year, base stations at Myola and Julatten will also be operational and able to provide coverage to some 900 premises in the Whyanbeel valley area. Those who are outside the coverage range of the fixed-wireless will have the benefit of the satellite network. The first satellite has been successfully launched and a satellite service is due to commence halfway through next year. The member's constituents in the electorate of Leichhardt have rightly been asking him when they will get service. I am pleased to report that there is strong progress being made because of the Turnbull government's focus on delivery when it comes to the NBN and when it comes to every other aspect of the work of government.

The previous government talked a big game when it came to the NBN, but there was very little delivery. By contrast, we are in delivery mode, and I am pleased to say not just nationally but also for the people of Whyanbeel. Fixed wireless is coming. Some have it
already and others will have it very soon. The feedback we are getting nationally on the fixed-wireless product is very good. We are delivering nationally when it comes to the internet, and we are delivering to the people of Whyanbeel.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr Bowen (McMahon) (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Social Services. I refer to the minister's previous answer about the need for spending restraint. Why is the government bringing back a $1,000 baby bonus, costing the budget $380 million?

Mr Porter (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (14:54): For the benefit of members opposite, the fundamental basic mechanics of what is now on the table as a proposal and the counterproposal, if you like, that members put are very simple. There is a desperate need for reform to the childcare system. Everybody recognises that. There are 165,000 Australian families crying out for change to the childcare system. We have proposed to put $3.5 billion into childcare, which would do three things: remove complexity, changing three very complicated subsidies into one; alleviate inflationary pressure; and provide better subsidies of $30 a week and $1,500 a week.

Opposition members interjecting—

The Speaker: Order! Members on my left, I am trying to listen to the answer.

Mr Porter: The relevance of that is that $3.5 billion worth of expenditure would be paid for by savings that we have proposed in relation to family tax benefits. Those savings are structured as follows.

Mr Bowen: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. Spending $380 million is not a saving.

The Speaker: The member for McMahon will resume his seat. The minister has the call.

Mr Porter: The proposals that we have before the House are to save $3.9 billion through the phasing out of FTB supplements. We also propose restructuring FTB-B rates and, indeed, inside that there are some spends, and one of the spends is on stay-at-home mums, which we think is a very sensible idea. Another one of the spends is to increase the rate of FTB-A for every single recipient family. In total, when the saves are accounted for and the spends are accounted for, the overall saving is $4.7 billion. That allows for payment in full of $3.5 billion worth of expenditure on child care as well as making a reasonable contribution to repair of the budget—which is a problem that you left us as a legacy.

Your alternative proposal is to turn $4.7 billion worth of savings into $500 million worth of savings. So how do you turn $4.7 billion worth of savings into $500 million worth of savings? You take it into the Labor caucus. That is their contribution to the debate. When you want to spend $3.5 billion on sweeping reforms to child care, $500 million worth of savings does not allow you to do what you need to do to reform the childcare system. Very interestingly, Shadow Treasurer, you have said some things in this regard. In fact, you said something very, very sensible.

The Speaker: The minister will refer to members by their correct titles.

Mr Porter: Mr Speaker, what was said was:
We will set out before the election how we are going to fund our election promises and how we will ensure there are more savings than spending over the decade ahead.

And there'll be more to come in the coming weeks.

Well, we wait with bated breath. I sat down and thought, 'Can I think—' (Time expired)

**Rail Infrastructure**

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (14:57): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Local engineering and environmental consultancy firms in my electorate of Parkes have shown a great interest in being part of the planning process for the Inland Rail. Will the minister advise the House of any opportunities available for these firms to be involved in this process?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:58): I thank the honourable member for Parkes for his question. He has been one of the greatest advocates for the Melbourne to Brisbane railway line over a long period of time, and I am sure he shares the pleasure of at last seeing things happen to bring this worthwhile project to fruition. He will be aware that the Inland Rail Implementation Group has presented its report to the government. That, along with the business case, has now been provided to Infrastructure Australia so that they can assess it on its merits.

I am also pleased to advise the honourable member that, just a few days ago, tenders were called for the technical advisory services for the project. That may well provide opportunities for local tenderers to be involved either as lead tenderers or as partners with others who might be providing this kind of advice. There will also be work to be done in areas such as local engineering and environmental consultancy, and plant and equipment. People will obviously be needed as the project advances. I think all of these things can be provided at a local level. Indeed, the Australian Rail Track Corporation is committed to using local people. This is a project that is going to traverse a large part of regional Australia, and so there will be huge opportunities for regional Australian companies to be involved in the construction.

Currently, firms in regional locations have been invited to be involved in some specific parts of the project. These locations include Tamworth, Singleton, Maitland, Newcastle, Dubbo and Gulgong; some of those are obviously in the member's electorate. The ARTC is also working with the Industry Capability Network to identify local tenderers who may be able to participate in this major project. This is an exciting project that will deliver enormous benefits to the rail transport network in Australia. It will help smooth the traffic between Melbourne and Brisbane. It will remove some of the congestion out of the Sydney train network and allow passenger trains to move more freely. It will link all of our state capitals through the rail network in a more cohesive way. It takes 500 kilometres off the journey from Brisbane to Perth. Those things are transformational projects for our nation's transport system. It is a project that will benefit regional Australia, but it will also benefit our capital cities and help our economy run more smoothly.

**Goods and Services Tax**

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, if the GST is increased to 15 per cent, how much more will Australians pay for a second-hand ute?
Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (15:01): The opposition have completely abandoned any interest in discussing tax reform, the economy or jobs. The honourable member for Watson, whom I have known for many years, is becoming a caricature of himself. Seriously, here we are in the nation's parliament. We have a government which is setting out to drive strong economic growth. We will be bringing out an innovation statement in a few weeks—

Mr Mitchell interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Member for McEwen!

Mr TURNBULL: in which we will look, with an open mind, at every lever of economic influence the government have, with a view to seeing how we can more efficiently promote work, saving, investment, enterprise and innovation. In other words, we will look to ensure that our children and our grandchildren have better jobs, to ensure that Australian businesses will have bigger markets and to ensure that Australian service providers, including universities, schools and tourism operators, will have greater reach into the international market. That is what we are seeking to do. Of course there is a debate about which measures would do that best; that is fair enough. Lots of people are engaging in that debate, but not the opposition. They have nothing to say; they just ask one sort of joke question after another, including this last one. First, they asked me a question about the GST. I gave a short answer; they were unhappy. Then they asked me another one. I answered for three minutes and actually made a few points about the different deadweight losses of different taxes. Now, having not liked the short answer or the long answer, they come up with a joke question. Really, Leader of the Opposition, you should treat the Australian economy, the jobs of today and the jobs of the future with much greater respect here in the nation's parliament.

The SPEAKER: The member for McEwen used an unparliamentary term that he will withdraw.

Mr Mitchell: I withdraw my remark.

The SPEAKER: Thank you.

Forde Electorate: Roads

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (15:03): My question is from constituent Tracey Ryder to the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. The Yatala Enterprise Area is one of the many regions in Forde experiencing rapid growth, with new warehousing, logistics and manufacturing facilities. Because of this, the need to upgrade the M1 motorway, a key infrastructure corridor, is vital. Can the minister outline how the government plans to deliver vital infrastructure in south-east Queensland and, in particular, in my electorate of Forde?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (15:04): I thank the honourable member for Forde for his question. I recognise that he represents one of the fastest-growing areas of Queensland. The Logan-Gold Coast area is expected to double its population over the next 20 years. As a result, the infrastructure requirements to service that area will become much more important. There is only one major highway, the Pacific Highway, that joins Brisbane and the Gold Coast. It is already as wide as eight lanes for a fair part of the distance, and it is clearly going to have to be extended and widened and given extra capacity as the years go by.
I am particularly aware of his interest in Exit 54, which is in the heart of his electorate and is a key distributor from the Pacific Highway. I visited the site with him on a number of occasions. We made commitments during the election campaign that the Commonwealth government—the coalition government—would deliver some financial support to make that intersection upgrade a reality. The state and local governments and developers have all contributed now. I note that the honourable member was present for the start of the construction of that intersection just a few days ago. I congratulate the member on the way in which he has fought for something that was important for his constituency, and he has delivered. That will be a significant upgrade for the Pacific Highway.

Of course, the Prime Minister has also recently announced $95 million as a contribution to the Gold Coast light rail, which is a bit south of the member's electorate but will still be very important in servicing the movement of people between the Gold Coast and the capital city of Brisbane, while also extending the capabilities of the light rail through the city of the Gold Coast.

All of this is particularly important with the Commonwealth Games coming to the Gold Coast in 2018. It will be a significant international event which will focus the attention of the world on the Gold Coast, and we certainly want it to be presented in the best possible light in those circumstances. The Commonwealth is contributing significantly towards the cost of hosting the games, and the infrastructure network to service the large population and the number of visitors will be critical to making those games a success. So I welcome the question, I congratulate the member on his own advocacy and I recognise that still more will have to be done in that area to meet the traffic needs of the people of Logan and the Gold Coast.

**Goods and Services Tax**

**Mr MITCHELL** (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (15:07): My question is to the Prime Minister. Single parents in Sunbury, in my electorate, with an income of $31,000 and two teenagers will lose $4,700 every year because of the Prime Minister's unfair cuts to family tax benefits. How is it fair to ask these families to then pay $3,000 more because of you jacking up the GST?

**Mr TURNBULL** (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (15:07): This appears to be the identical question to the one that the member for Parramatta just asked. In any event, the very well-informed Minister for Social Services will answer the question.

**Mr PORTER** (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (15:07): As I noted previously, that figure that is being cited includes the schoolkids bonus, which has been abolished and which has nothing to do with the present measures on family tax benefits before the parliament. It is a very dishonest way in which to look at the cameos that the opposition have put out. If I might say, going back to the structural mechanics of what we have before us, we are proposing $4.7 billion worth of savings to provide for $3.5 billion worth of child care and to allow for a modest amount to—

*Mrs Kate Ellis interjecting*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Adelaide is warned.
Mr PORTER: go into budget repair. We do not pretend that it is absolutely possible to make savings proposals universally popular. That is a very, very difficult thing to do. In fact, the member for McMahon said this:
We will go to the next election with an alternative vision for the nation, with detailed policy commitments and with savings proposals which will ensure that our election commitments are funded and that we have plan for a sustainable budget.
Not all these savings proposals will be universally popular or will necessarily win us votes.
But the member for McMahon has found that the way to make savings measures universally popular is just to not tell anyone what they are; then you are absolutely guaranteed that they will be universally popular savings measures!

What is absolutely fascinating is that we have proposed savings measures which pay for sweeping reform to child care by making rational restraint to the family tax benefit system. Some of that rational restraint you are agreeing to; some if it you are not. But what I have said previously is absolutely fascinating is that you all recognise what we recognise, and that is that if you are to move back towards surplus and pay for necessary reforms such as in areas like child care, you must look inside the welfare budget and you must look inside the social services budget; a large part of that budget is the family tax benefit system; you must look at that. Our proposals are well known, your proposals are this. The fascinating thing is that at the end of this little press release out today appears this interesting phrase:
Labor … will continue to investigate fair ways of ensuring our Family Tax Benefits system remains targeted to those who need it most.
That is code for saying that they realise what we realise: you must find savings inside FTB. The only difference is that we are explicitly stating where the somewhere is and for them the somewhere is just somewhere not known and thereby never unpopular.

Diabetes

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (15:10): My question is to the Minister for Health. Does the government intend to assist individuals and families managing type 1 diabetes by subsidising continuous glucose monitoring devices, particularly for children?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health, Minister for Sport and Minister for Aged Care) (15:11): I thank my neighbour and friend the member for Mallee for this important question. He has written to me twice on the subject of continuous glucose monitoring, as have many other members in this House and in the other place. This is an issue of huge importance to families and individuals managing type 1 diabetes, and there are some 120,000 in Australia today. Continuous glucose monitoring effectively gives real-time monitoring of blood glucose levels—quite different from the continual finger prick, which, in a small child, is a very difficult and very stressful task for a parent to perform, particularly as it is during the night. It is particularly difficult for parents of young children who themselves need to be educated about a disease that they cannot yet understand. We have a strong record when it comes to supporting people with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes. The government subsidises products under the National Diabetes Services Scheme up to the value of $180 million a year, and we provide subsidies under an insulin pump program up to about $1½ million a year.

As would any health minister when presented with the stories, the evidence and, as I have, the understanding of type 1 diabetes, my question, of course, to my department is: 'What can...
we do to help? What can we do to do more?" I understand that there is no formal way of measuring cost-effectiveness of new technologies to come onto the National Diabetes Services Scheme, and we need to be able to demonstrate that efficacy as well so that perhaps we can encourage the companies that manufacture these devices to do some more testing to build that evidence base so that we can go forward with confidence and know who we can support and how soon. So I am very committed to doing this and I want to reassure the families and the patients who are listening that we will do what we can. Thank you.

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

### DOCUMENTS

**Presentation**

*Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science)*

(15:13): A document is presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members earlier today. Details of the document will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

#### AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

**Audit report No. 7 of 2015-16**

*The SPEAKER* (15:13): I present the Auditor-General's Audit report No. 7 of 2015-16 entitled *Managing compliance with the wildlife trade provisions of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999: Department of the Environment; Department of Immigration and Border Protection.* Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

### BUSINESS

**Days and Hours of Meeting**

*Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science)*

(15:14): On indulgence, members might like to know that the House will be suspended tomorrow at 10 am, the bells will ring at 11.45 am and the House will resume at 11.50. This is to enable members who wish to attend at the War Memorial for Remembrance Day services. The Federation Chamber will not sit on 11 November. Members who wish to have constituency statements in the Federation Chamber will be given time to make those statements on Thursday, 12 November. This is for the accommodation of members who wish to attend at the War Memorial tomorrow.

#### MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

**Household Budget**

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

The Government's attack on the household budget of Australians.

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—
Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (15:15): It is extraordinary that twice in question time today the Minister for Social Services was given the opportunity to talk about the impact of the government’s cuts on families. At no time could even the word ‘family’ cross his lips. At no time could he actually show any interest or any regard for the impact of this government’s very harsh cuts on all sorts of different families in Australia. We will have the opportunity today to give him 10 whole minutes to see if once, just once, he could say something that demonstrates he understands and this government understands just how harsh these cuts are and what they will mean for Australian families.

It is nearly two months since this Prime Minister deposed that other Prime Minister who now sits over there. He has had two months to come up with a new agenda. He has had two months to actually think about the cost of living pressures that Australians are under and to come up with a new agenda that he says would all be about fairness—new ideas about how to introduce fairness for families and a fair go that we know over the last two years has been completely lacking from this Liberal government. Yet, in this two-month period, all we have heard from this Prime Minister is that they intend to deliver more cuts to Australian families, more pressure on Australian family budgets and more unfairness.

What we know from this government is that this will leave millions of Australian families thousands of dollars worse off. We also know—because they want to have this debate or conversation—that they want to increase the GST to 15 per cent. One thing we know from these Liberals is that they never give up—they never, ever give up—when it is about hurting Australian families. Let us just look at the detail, because the Minister for Social Services refused to answer the question from the member for Parramatta and the member for McEwen about what these cuts would mean. So I will tell the Minister for Social Services and, of course, the Australian parliament: this Prime Minister’s cuts to family payments will mean that 130,000 single-parent families and 3,900 grandparent carers will be worse off. One and half million families will lose their FTBA supplements—that is, $726 per child. If you have two or three kids, $726 for every single child will be cut from those family budgets. Around 500,000 of these families earn less than $50,000 a year. Do you think this Minister for Social Services has got any idea of what it is like to live on $50,000 a year? And he is going to take thousands of dollars out of the pockets of these families. An average two-parent family, with two children in school, will be more than $2,600 a year worse off. A typical single-parent family will be more than $4,700 a year worse off. The Minister for Social Services does not want us to count the schoolkids bonus.

Opposition members: No!

Ms MACKLIN: Who cut that? Which government cut the schoolkids bonus? We gave it to families to help them with the cost of going to school. This government wants to take it off them. This government wants to take it off families. So, of course, we are going to make sure that families know what the total cost of the cuts of this Liberal government is proposing to family budgets.

We have the Prime Minister saying in an interview earlier this month that fairer is what it is all about. That is what the Prime Minister said: fairer is what it is all about. Yet, he is taking $4,700 out of the pockets of a single-parent family. He also says that fairness means ‘the burden’—and this is quoting the Prime Minister—should be ‘borne by those best able to pay it’. Yet this Prime Minister and this Minister for Social Services want to cut the family
payments that help Australian families with the cost of raising children. That is what family payments do. They help families put food on the table. They help families pay the rent. They help make sure that families have got shoes for their children to go to school. That is what family tax benefits are paid for, and families are going to have a lot less of that money to help with the cost of raising their children.

They say fairness is a priority, yet they want to take thousands of dollars out of the pockets of grandparent carers. They say fairness is what it is all about, but of course all they want to do is introduce a regressive tax called the GST. How fair can it be to take $4,700 out of the pockets of a single-parent family? How fair can it then be to add on top of that a higher GST, increasing the cost of groceries, possibly a new tax on health care, on education and on fresh food? How can any of this be fair? You cannot just say that you believe in fairness. You cannot just say that is what it is. You actually have to deliver the policies that are fair. Once you get beyond the spin of this Prime Minister—I don't know if you can say that the Minister for Social Services is into spin—all he can talk about is something that has absolutely nothing to do with families.

What we do know, though, is that all of this is going to lead to a much harder life for families. I want to remind the Minister for Social Services of what the actual dollar amount is for the loss of the schoolkids bonus—$842 for each secondary school child. That is what families will lose. Those children are not in child care; they are in secondary school! Those families will lose $842 as a result of cutting the schoolkids bonus. Of course, for each primary school aged child, $422 will be lost. Add to that what the government wants to do to paid parental leave—we have not heard of that for a while. It means that 80,000 new parents each year will be worse off. It was a cut that was described as 'a rort' and 'a fraud' by those opposite.

We have launched a new campaign today: we are calling on this Prime Minister to give families a fair go—to stop increasing the cost of living for families; stop the unfair cuts; stop the plans to increase the GST. With all of these cuts—whether it is the schoolkids bonus, whether it is the GP tax by stealth—all Australians know a very simple truth: as long as there is a Liberal government in power the cost of living for Australian families will go up. All the Minister for Social Services can go on about is the state of the budget and all the concerns about the government's budget, but he completely forgets about the impact on family budgets—one and a half million family budgets are going to be affected by these cuts. It will happen in Gippsland as much it will happen anywhere else. Don't worry: I will be making sure that the people of Gippsland understand—

Mr Chester interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gippsland!

Ms MACKLIN: that the member for Gippsland will be voting for a cut of $4700 to every single parent in his electorate. Labor, of course, protected Australian families when this government tried to introduce these harsh cuts in the 2014 budget. The government backed down because it could not get the cuts through the Senate and because Labor ran such a strong campaign right around Australia against the cuts. We will do exactly the same this time. We will campaign up and down the length of Australia to make sure that families are protected from these unfair cuts. (Time expired)
Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (15:25): I thank the member opposite for her contribution. Perhaps the best place to start, for the sake of harmony, is where there is some agreement and, looking over the Labor response today, there does seem to be some agreement at least to some of the savings proposals that the government has placed before the parliament. I refer to the media release that has come out today from members opposite, which notes that:

We will not oppose the Liberal's changes to family tax benefit B for couple families, a saving of more than $500 million.

That does represent at least a modest acceptance of a portion of what would have been the overall savings from a fiscal measure over four years of $4.7 billion. They are agreeing to a saving of $500 million, and that saving appears to be, if I can infer, agreed to being fair by members opposite.

It is our proposal, and it is one that has been agreed to by members opposite, that for a family, which has been receiving family tax benefit A and family tax benefit B, when the youngest child turns 13 the family tax benefit B would cease. Labor seems to have agreed that that measure is fair in the overall context—we do refer very consistently to the budgetary context that we are in at the moment, and that is something I will return to in a moment—but in effect nothing else in this suite of measures, which is designed to save money, restrain expenditure and pay for child care, is deemed to be fair, but this one thing is.

I want to touch on the issue of the schoolkids bonus. Each and every piece of data or cameo that is produced by the Labor Party cites a reduced figure that acknowledges that the schoolkids bonus has been abolished. That was a payment designed by Labor to go to families; it was explicitly linked to the mining tax. So, when the member for Jagajaga states that Labor is protecting families, the real-world question arises: are you protecting the interests of families by continuing to support the payment of a bonus, which is now being paid for by borrowed money?

When we find ourselves in a situation of inherited deficits and inherited debt—which is precisely where we are—we are borrowing the money to pay for every piece of growth in expenditure in every portfolio that cannot be restrained. The question arises in respect to something like the schoolkids bonus: are you actually protecting the long-term interests of families by paying them money that in effect is borrowed because we are in debt and deficit. When we came to government we inherited the five worst deficits ever in Australian history—worth $191 billion compounded. We inherited $123 billion in projected accumulative deficits. As I noted earlier, Treasury noted that, if remedial action to save some money and restrain expenditure growth was not taken, we faced at least 10 years of ongoing deficits. What that means for every single child in a family that receives family tax benefit A or family tax benefit B—if there is some form of expenditure inside that system that cannot be restrained and that money is being borrowed—those children will end up having to pay that money back when they are fully fledged members of the Australian taxation system. So you are in effect borrowing money for payments that must be repaid by people when they inevitably enter the tax system. So a child at 13, who becomes a 23- or 24-year-old taxpayer, may well find themselves, without appropriate expenditure restraint, in a situation where they are paying taxes to fund not only the welfare system of their own time but also the welfare system from five, eight, 10, 15 years ago. That is not a fair situation. The only way that
situation can be avoided is if there is meaningful restraint in expenditure. That, as I noted in question time, is a very, very difficult process to engage in.

What is very notable is that members opposite acknowledge, in principle, that savings have to be made within the budget, that we do have a spending problem. They acknowledge that in principle. The member for McMahon has been intelligently and rationally quite consistent in noting this on a variety of occasions. He even went so far as to say, in a comment he made in respect of the 2014-15 budget at the Press Club on 20 May 2015:

Labor does not necessarily object to the quantum of fiscal consolidation in this budget.

That is simply a statement that the Labor shadow Treasurer agreed that the type of turnaround that was envisaged in the 2014-15 budget is appropriate. Yet, at some point, that must involve rational, considered savings. Some of those savings will be reinvested in other expenditure measures, as is the case here with sweeping reforms to child care. Some of those savings will contribute to fiscal consolidation and closing that gap between what we spend and what we earn as a nation every year.

What appears to happen is that members opposite agree in principle to the notion that you must make savings. They agree with the notion that savings are difficult to make. They agree with the notion that savings proposals will, in the words of the member the McMahon, not be 'universally popular' or 'necessarily win us votes', and yet they do not nominate savings. They oppose a variety of savings. They oppose savings that they themselves suggested should be made whilst they were in government.

We heard some talk today about the budgetary black hole that members opposite face. What they have done since we have come to government is oppose or suggest the reversal of saving measures which would total $48.5 billion. They have also proposed $10.6 billion worth of expenditure. That would not deliver anything that resembles fiscal consolidation. Is that in the best interest of Australian families? It cannot possibly be in the best interest of Australian families to propose an overall budgetary setting that never sees our nation return to surplus and sees the children of each and every family coming into the tax system with the burden of paying taxes not only to provide for welfare services and infrastructure for their own time but ending up with the debt and the requirement to pay the interest on that debt to service our expenditure today. How is that possibly, on any rational analysis, fair?

Mr Danby: Cut other areas.

Mr PORTER: This is the thing, isn't it? You have proposed to oppose or reverse $48.5 billion worth of savings. You have promised $10.6 billion worth of expenditure. That leaves you with a $59.1 billion problem. You have proposed two revenue measures, which would be $3.8 billion and $1.3 billion at absolute best estimates, which leaves you with a $54 billion problem. That is not a problem that you solve without taking a rational look at different types of expenditure.

Unpacking what we have proposed, you are now suggesting that it is fair, rational and appropriate, in the context of the very difficult budgetary circumstances we face, to have a cessation of family tax benefit part B for coupled families but not for single parent families or any other type of families. We agree that, in context, this has to be done—and we will take whatever savings that you agree to, within reason. But, if you are a coupled family who makes a contribution to child care, which will benefit a whole range of families, and also to
return the nation to surplus, which is very important for the children of any single family that exists in Australia, you might ask why it is that you should bear a very special burden over a family that is structured in a slightly different way. The reality is that we will have a range of debates about fairness. But, as I noted in question time, the only way to absolutely guarantee that everyone who may be affected in any way by savings measure that they think are unfair is simply not to have a savings measure or to have one and not tell anyone about it.

What those opposite have perpetually noted is that there must be savings within family tax benefits. When those opposite were in government, they knew about the budgetary situation that we were in because they chose to move 77,000 single mothers, who were previously grandfathered out, off a parenting payment. They lost more than $150 per fortnight and were suddenly, without warning, without any mitigating spending on training or education and without giving them any time to adjust, forced onto Newstart. You obviously thought that, in the circumstances, that was a very difficult decision. But it had to sit within the context that it is not in anyone's interest that the children of today that graduate into the tax system should end up with debt. *(Time expired)*

**Mr Danby** (Melbourne Ports) *(15:35)*: As the smoke clears, the dust settles and the bodies of the fallen are stretchered to the government backbench or sent to the embassy in Washington DC, it becomes increasingly clear that our new unelected Prime Minister, the 'Waffler from Wentworth', is all talk and no action. He is running the government the way a matron from Double Bay might run a dinner party. All luxurious options are on the table to be served by the butler to invited guests, including Senator Sinodinos, who is still under investigation by ICAC, and the lamentable member of the Fisher, who arranged for the former Speaker's diary to be stolen and who is currently under investigation by the AFP.

We have gone from the pompous, clueless moralisers of the Abbott era running the show to the slick 'Age of Turnbull'—

**Mr Hartsuyker:** Acting Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member is reflecting on another member. He is reflecting on half the team, in fact. He should confine himself to the debate.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Vasta):** The member for Melbourne Ports has the call.

**Mr Danby:** Thank you very much—where the glorious optimism of the Sydney Harbour front triumphs over the reality of the rest of Australia. As the columnist, Rita Panahi, said:

[The Prime Minister] proves the adage that if you're short on substance, then compensate with plenty of style.

Listen to his speech about the desperate need to update Australia's taxation system and you may be impressed by broad motherhood statements about "fairness" and "incentivisation" but you will be clueless about how he intends to reform the system.

We on this side of the House want some clarity, some certainty, for Australians. As the member for Jagajaga said during question time, the government is desperately shying away from that. That is why we asked the government if it could rule out a 15 per cent GST on things like fresh food and child care, but the government has refused to give that commitment. We asked the government if it could rule out a 15 per cent GST on aged care and services, but the Prime Minister refused. This is at a time when the Prime Minister wants to spend—while the finance minister wants to save money—$158 million on a useless plebiscite on marriage.
equality which the Prime Minister, the member for Wentworth, himself had previously derided. It is worth considering what else $158 million could buy—$158 million could pay for 10,000 age pensions for an entire year. More than this, the government is looking to punish grandparents who look after their grandkids. These grandparents are facing cuts to family tax benefit B for kids over 13 and losing family tax benefit B entirely for kids over 16.

Mr Stephen Jones: That's outrageous.

Mr DANBY: Exactly, it is outrageous. These people stand to lose up to $4,700 per year. Grandparents who look after their grandkids and single parents do all they can for the kids in their charge—they usually do not have disposable income. But under this Abbott-Turnbull government they are facing a triple whammy: an increase in the GST, decreasing pensions and an end to their family tax benefit B. NATSEM, the respected social modelling agency, has said that a 15 per cent GST will affect the lowest 20 per cent of income earners, with seven per cent of their income being taken away while the top 20 per cent will only be affected by losing three per cent of their income. I will conclude by quoting the columnist Rita Panahi again in the Melbourne Herald Sun:

It's all well and good for Turnbull—

the Prime Minister, the member for Wentworth—

to wax lyrical about nautical allusions when laying out his blueprint for the taxation system, but the ordinary Australian wants to know whether the GST or Medicare levy will be increased or whether their benefits will be cut in order to balance the Budget.

As the member for Grayndler said, they say they have got a plan but they just do not want to tell anyone about it. That is what we are trying to force them to fess up to with this MPI—cuts to grandparents who are receiving family tax benefit B will hurt ordinary Australian families, and if that is what the Prime Minister, the member for Wentworth, says will happen then it is certainly not fair. If the Minister for Finance wants an area to cut, get rid of the useless plebiscite on marriage equality, costing $158 million. We are elected here to make the difficult decisions, so there is an area where he could save money immediately.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Assistant Minister for Defence) (15:40): It is a great pleasure to join this matter of importance discussion in this Labor’s proclaimed year of big ideas. It is November now and it seems that after 11 months they have had no ideas. We are finally starting to see the full extent of Labor’s big ideas. You can imagine the brains trust—I use the term ‘brains trust’ very loosely—or the parliamentary tactics committee saying, ‘We need to release our first big idea, so let’s run a scare campaign on household budgets. If that doesn’t work, how about we run a scare campaign on the Prime Minister’s wealth. If all else fails, let’s run a scare campaign on taxes and the GST.’

Ms Macklin: How much was a lamb roast?

Mr CHESTER: It is good to see the member for Jagajaga is with us. I will always welcome the member for Jagajaga in my electorate. In fact, I am happy to arrange a visit. We can go down to Gippsland together, we can meet the workers and you can tell them why you wanted to sack them. You can say why you wanted to sack all those power station workers. You can tell them. I look forward to you explaining why Labor had a policy of contracts for closure to sack blue-collar workers in my electorate. I look forward to that. You can explain
how that helps the household budget. How does it help the household budget to sack the workers, member for Jagajaga?

Ms Macklin: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I thought we were in some new paradigm where we did not have scare campaigns.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): There is no point of order.

Mr CHESTER: It might be a scare campaign but I am quoting your policy—this is your policy, member for Jagajaga. You will remember it well. How does it help the family budget to sack blue-collar workers in Gippsland? That was your policy—you took it to the Australian people and they rejected it. They rejected your policy.

Ms Macklin: What is your policy?

Mr CHESTER: Our policy is to get rid of the carbon tax, and we have. What is the next scare campaign? Malcolm Turnbull is going to cancel Christmas? Barnaby Joyce is going to shoot the Easter Bunny? What is the next scare campaign? The Australian people have moved on. The Australian people are better than the Australian Labor Party. The Australian people simply do not want Labor back. I know it may come as a rude newsflash, but they do not want you back. The Australian people are saying to Labor, 'You had your chance, you failed and we do not want you back.' I know it is painful. I know opposition is no fun; it is no fun at all—I had six or so years there. But the not so scary scare campaign is not working with the Australian people. The Australian people honoured us with their vote. They honoured us with the opportunity to govern the greatest nation in the world, and they instinctively understood that we had a big job to do. They knew we had a big job to do; they instinctively understood that we had to clean up Labor's mess. I get out a lot in Gippsland, I get out a lot in regional Australia, and a lot of people from all walks of life talk to me about very important issues. They talk about roads, they talk about health, they talk about education, they talk about jobs, and do you know what? In the past two years not one person has ever said to me in Gippsland, 'Oh gee, I wish Labor was back.' They do not want you back. I wish I could tell you it is not personal but it I am sorry it is personal, member for Jagajaga. They simply do not trust you. The Australian people do not trust you. They do not trust you to make the big decisions. The Australian people do not trust you with their money and they simply will not trust you with their vote. We are getting on with the job of delivering for regional Australians and governing for all Australians. While Labor is stuck in the past, with more and more not so scary scare campaigns—

Ms Macklin: What about the family budget?

Mr CHESTER: I know those opposite do not want to hear the good news, but there is good news. Roy Morgan Research says business confidence increased by 6.5 points in October.

Mr Hartsuyker: How much?

Mr CHESTER: By 6.5 points. That is good news—good news for the economy, very positive, giving business confidence to create new jobs; 200,000 jobs created by business in the past 12 months.

Mr Conroy interjecting—
Mr CHESTER: Don't you want to hear the good news? They do not want to hear about confidence; they do not want to hear about new jobs—it is much better to run a scare campaign! We are getting out there and building new infrastructure, particularly in regional areas—there is a $50 billion infrastructure plan being delivered right now throughout Australia, creating new jobs and improving productivity. Those opposite simply do not want to hear the good news. They simply do not want to hear how this government is getting on with the job of delivering for all Australians. I look forward to the member for Jagajaga joining me in Gippsland and talking to Gippslanders about how their family budget will be affected when the Labor Party's policy results in blue-collar workers being sacked. The member for Jagajaga is most welcome to come to Gippsland at any time. I am happy to arrange a visit for her. *(Time expired)*

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (15:44): On a more serious note, I am very pleased to have been given the opportunity to speak on this MPI today because the last two federal budgets have been very difficult for the majority of the people living in my electorate. These budgets have been very harsh and very unfair, and the cuts that have been associated with them have affected a very large number of the people that live in Calwell. The news for them, unfortunately, has not been good news, and it continues to be very bad news.

The cuts to carers' payments and the loss of the schoolkids bonus—to mention just a couple—have taken their toll on already stretched and stressed household budgets. Now, of course, there is the additional prospect of further cuts to the family tax benefits. Cuts to services such as child care, health and welfare payments and benefits are tough enough, but when you add these to the huge problems of job losses, industry closures and underemployment that have disproportionately affected people in the north-west of Melbourne, the claim by this government that they want the burden of economic reform to be shared fairly becomes absurd and unbelievable.

Calwell has a large number of single parent families. It has a large number of pensioners and people dependent on welfare payments for their survival. We have a large number of families living on the lowest 20 per cent income bracket. And it is not just those dependant on Centrelink payments who are struggling, but also those who slip off the radar when we talk about the disadvantaged. For those who have jobs, there is still the struggle of low pay in an increasingly unregulated labour market, where the pressure is on to cut penalty rates and conditions and where job security is for many now a long-forgotten dream. Many of my constituents are dealing with chronic underemployment whilst still trying to cope with large mortgages and other household bills. There is the huge problem of job losses in my electorate, particularly with the decimation of the local car industry, the general lack of support for the manufacturing industry, and downsizing, downscaling and relocation, which leaves so much devastation for workers, their families and our community.

We all know that those in higher income brackets not only have a greater ability to bear increases in the cost of living than those on much lower incomes, but they also have so many more options to minimise their tax. The Leader of the Opposition has said: Labor has demonstrated that we are not opposed to fair and reasonable changes to family payments—but it should not be at the expense of families who can least afford it.
The cuts to family tax benefits, first announced in this government's disastrous 2014 budget, might have been modified around the edges, but the fact remains that the burden on those least able to bear them remains heavier—a situation that is clearly unfair and unreasonable.

And to add to the stresses of trying to make ends meet, we now have the government trying to talk up and justify the need for a hike in the GST. This would place an unbearable burden on my constituents. It is no good talking about compensation, which will do nothing to assist the invisible poor—those I mentioned earlier, who may have jobs but not enough working hours, very low pay rates and limited job security. In these exciting, agile days of discussion and listening, we have heard proposals to even extend the GST to fresh food—another disaster which would unfairly and disproportionately affect low-income communities. For years, many valuable service and support organisations in my electorate have been striving to encourage people to eat well, to replace cheap and nourishment-poor fast foods with fresh and nutritious food to help improve health outcomes. I have often referred to the rising incidence of diabetes in my electorate amongst a number of other health problems that impact lower-socioeconomic communities throughout Australia. There is surely no need to again point out the link between a lack of financial resources, poor diet and poor health.

NATSEM modelling has shown that an increase in the rate of the GST to 15 per cent would mean that people in the lowest 20 percent of income brackets would have to pay seven per cent more. People in the highest 20 per cent income bracket would pay just three per cent more of their income. I want to remind the Prime Minister of his claim that 'fairness has got to be the key priority.' My electorate does not see the attack by this government on the household budgets of those on the lowest incomes as anywhere near fair. The Prime Minister has invited us to have a discussion about tax reform. People in my electorate are happy to contribute to this debate and to send the message loud and clear that they just cannot cop any more of the burden that is being imposed on them by this government and its disastrous budget proposals. (Time expired)

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (15:50): Today, we have a bizarre matter of political distraction from the same people who spent up big when they were in charge of the public purse and left a massive, gaping hole in the public credit card. Their level of fiscal incompetence was unparalleled. There was cash for clunkers, pink batts, $900 cheques to people who had died, set top boxes and millions of dollars of payments from taxes that never eventuated—just to name a few.

Who are they to talk about household budgets? The Labor Party approaches public accounts in the same reckless way a few of their faceless bosses use a union credit card. Where was the current Labor leader's concern for the health and wellbeing of the families of four women who worked as mushroom pickers a few years back when he was leader of the union negotiating wages and conditions on their behalf? Where was the former union leader's concern when the women were made redundant and then asked to reapply for their jobs through a labour hire company? Where did the $4,000-a-month payments go, which the union received over six months in return for what the union claimed was for health and safety training? Where was the Labor leader's concern for the household budgets of struggling Australian families when Cleanevent signed off on a secret sweetheart deal with the union that cut cleaners' penalty rates and saved the company $1.5 million? Most people who know what has been going on in the labour market now know that in return for extending the 2006
enterprise bargaining agreement, the company agreed to pay the union $25,000 a year for three years in membership fees. Just last month, The Advertiser reported that under Bill Shorten's EBA, Cleanevent's level 1 casual cleaners were paid $18.14 an hour, rather than the $50.17 an hour they were entitled to under the 2010 award—a 176 per cent pay cut. A leopard does not change its spots and the Labor leader is wasting his time looking sheepishly naïve about the 'put it on the credit card practice' of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd Labor governments that created such a mess of the Howard government's great legacy of leaving money in the bank and year-on-year surpluses.

However, it is worth noting, the recent Intergenerational report shows how the decisions already enacted by the coalition government are making real progress in fixing Labor's mess. Continuing Labor's unsustainable spending would have given Australia a massively higher debt of $5.6 trillion! And, guess what happens when Labor acts like a dodgy union leader and goes on a reckless spending spree? Someone has to pay for it. In this case it is not only the poorly served union members who are paying Labor politicians to sit on that side of the House. Sadly, every single Australian man, woman and child are still paying a lot more than they should because a few years ago Labor MPs and a group of former union leaders sat on this side of the House.

History demonstrates that every Australian has to pay for the reckless and irresponsible spending decisions of Labor governments. Difficult decisions have to be made. A growing economy is the best and only real way to guarantee jobs for the future and to support a strong welfare safety net that ensures people and families do not get left behind.

Our plan is to build a strong national platform for economic growth and jobs that backs Australians who are out there every day making their way in the world, working hard, saving for their future, and investing in their capabilities and opportunities. Our plan is designed to back Australia and Australians to earn more. The government will reform and restructure family tax benefit to give families money each fortnight, to encourage workforce participation and to fund the new child-care system. Around 1.2 million families or 2.2 million children will benefit from an increase in their FTB A fortnightly rates. We are also increasing the fortnightly rates of youth allowance and disability support pension, so that they are aligned with the new FTB A rate.

The coalition government wants to help families find affordable child care. This is an important productivity measure that will also boost female workforce participation. From 1 July 2017, our new child-care subsidies will support parents who choose to work. It will mean working families with incomes between $65,000 and $170,000 will be around $30 a week better off. The coalition is backing children's education with more funding than ever before. I am fairly sure there are a few struggling Australian households that have a national—(Time expired)

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (15:55): I am very pleased today to represent the people of Lalor in this very important matter of public importance because it is of critical importance for 21,000 families in my electorate. What we are talking about today is what this government is bringing home to roost for 21,000 families in my electorate. Lalor is home to 60,000 families. People come to live in our area of the world because it is affordable and because it is welcoming. Lots of families—clearly 21,000 of them—earn less than $51,000 a year. This government has said in this chamber today that they are going to rip out support
from those families. On top of taking away the schoolkids bonus, from which of course families are still hurting, when getting ready for school next year they are finding that in the year after they are going to lose the supplements. They are finding out that when a child is 16, at the most expensive time to send a child to school, with a book list potentially costing $800, depending on which subjects will they are doing and depending on whether they are doing a VCE where it is just books or whether they are doing a VET or a VCAL when you have costs of the course on top, at that critical point we are going to be saying to these low-income families, 'You can't afford to send our kids to school for years 11 and 12. They should leave school.' That is what this government is saying to families in Lalor. That is what this translates to.

I have a message for the flourishing Prime Minister who, with every flourish of the glasses, carries a cut to families. This government talks a new game but is playing a very old game—the old game of punish the underprivileged, the old game of take from those who can least afford it. The flourishing Prime Minister is hiding this behind the new rhetoric of fairness. Fair to whom? Prime Minister, who are you fair to? Fair to the families who you are going to rip $2,600 a year from their income? Fair to the 1.3 million families across the country who are going to lose the FTB supplement? Fair to the 500,000 families on less than $50,000 a year who stand to lose $726 per child from the supplements?

I am sure these seem like small numbers to multinationals. They seem like small numbers to millionaires. They are not small numbers in Lalor. These are the numbers that make or break a family. These are the numbers that mean a child can continue at school or cannot. We heard from the new Minister for Social Services, a minister who is trying to demonstrate to the rest of the frontbench that he is a good toe cutter, who is going to use Social Services as an audition for Treasury, to prove to those over there but he can cut toes better than anyone else.

Mr Husic: It's snakes and ladders.

Ms RYAN: That is right. Families in Lalor are going down those snakes and there are no ladders being offered by this government—none at all.

I listened carefully to the member for Wentworth today, because I wanted to see if any of those complex phrases actually led to complex outcomes for families in Lalor. But, no, what I got were very complex sentences. I am still trying to find the subject in those complex sentences. But he did do a bit of listing. So now I have some lists.

This is what I heard from the Minister for Social Services at the dispatch box this afternoon. I heard him being heartless. I heard arrogance. I saw a good rendition of Scrooge. I heard bullying. I saw a rigid person with a rigid attitude to fiscal responsibility, with no heart when it comes to families. I heard a man who does not understand that you take that money out of the pockets of families in my electorate and you impact on our local economy. That is what I heard. I heard someone who does not understand economics at all. If these changes go through, if they get passed—(Time expired)

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (16:00): I was an interested observer of the media conference that the opposition leader, the shadow Treasurer and the member for Jagajaga conducted just before question time on the issue of the childcare package. There were lots of words spoken, and there was the usual feigned indignation, but when you strip away all the frippery here is
the bottom line. Of $3.2 billion needed to fund the childcare package, Labor have only supported $500 million of spending. So, on the one hand, in that media conference I heard the shadow Treasurer talk about fiscal responsibility; and then they oppose over 80 per cent of the cost of delivering the childcare program.

So I ask the member for Jagajaga, the shadow minister for families, to reconcile that position with her conversation with David Speers on Sky on 25 May this year. It is an instructive transcript.

MACKLIN: … We certainly can understand that for many families child care is very expensive, and we want to improve that -

SPEERS: That has to be paid for somehow?

MACKLIN: It does have to be paid for somehow … I say 'Hear, hear' to the member for Jagajaga—absolutely.

I ask her: how will the childcare package be paid for? What about the clear challenges to Australian families in other areas of the childcare package that you are not going to fund? Do you understand those challenges? Do you even care about those challenges? How is it fiscally responsible to want to have all of the spends when it comes to governing but none of the saves? Because that is the path we followed from 2008 to 2013 that put us on a trajectory to $667 billion of debt. You cannot have all of the spends and none of the saves, particularly when you are dealing with the sort of economic circumstances that we inherited after 2013.

The Australian people will not be fooled. They know that Labor's uncontrolled spending is at the heart of our budget problems today. On almost every significant policy measure Labor has demonstrated the same sort of behaviour that the people explicitly repudiated. The reason the Labor Party got its lowest vote in 100 years is that Australians can see the inconsistency between what Labor promises and what they actually deliver.

You might recall that this was meant to be the 'year of ideas'. It is just over a month before the end of the year of ideas and it seems the latest idea is not to fund 80 per cent of the childcare package—voting against billions of dollars of budget savings, including Labor's own budget savings, ratcheting up spending in some of the biggest portfolio areas of social services, education and health. Even the public broadcasters have been promised more money under Labor's constant spend-and-borrow strategy. That is over $60 billion in new spending since the 2013 election—a growing black hole to the black hole that we inherited after 2013.

You might have heard at that media conference before question time, and from previous speakers on the other side, the words 'harshness' and 'fairness' and every multisyllabic permutation of the word 'cuts!' that you would ever want to hear. Let's discuss fairness for a moment. What is unfair and harsh is Labor's planned changes to people's superannuation. Recall that on 22 April this year the Leader of the Opposition and shadow Treasurer said in a media release that Labor will 'ensure that earnings of more than $75,000 during the retirement phase are taxed at a concessional rate of 15 per cent instead of being tax free'. They said they would lower the threshold for the 15 per cent high-income superannuation charge by $50,000. How is it fair to unexpectedly and retrospectively tax people's retirement savings that they have been putting away for 20, 30, 40, 50 years? That is what people in Tasmania are telling me is unfair—

Opposition members interjecting—
Mr NIKOLIC: I would like member's opposite interjecting to explain how it is fair to introduce retrospective laws on super to trouser the hard-earned superannuation of people after a life time of saving. How is it fair to bring back a carbon tax by way of an emissions trading scheme—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): Order. The member for Griffith on a point of order?

Ms Butler: Relevance. As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, the coalition introduced cuts to defined benefits scheme pension tests.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I call the honourable member for Bass.

Mr NIKOLIC: The subject today was people being able to survive and live on measures that the government introduces, and I am hoisting them on their own petard. So, when Labor talks about attacks on Australian household budgets, I encourage them to reflect on their record—record burdens, record debt, record spending and a record we will not repeat. (Time expired)


Ms Claydon: He should be.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (16:05): I will be after the next election.

We should not be very surprised about today's debate. Some things we should be able to take in our stride. What we are talking about today are those opposite returning to type. We saw in 2013 how they put paid to electoral promises. They said they would not cut health, they would not cut education and they would not cut pensions. They actually gave a new dimension to pork-barrelling. They dispelled the notion of their trustworthiness.

In 2014 they brought down their first budget. They could not help themselves. Some things we should be able to see in our electorate. What did they do? They attacked families. They attacked low- to middle-income families. By the way, they have had their opportunity; they just elected a new leader not all that long ago. He had the chance to reposition that government. He had a chance to give some substance to those words he preached about fairness and decency and how we would deliver that. But they have not done that at all. They have continued down this path of attacking low- to middle-income families. Now we see that they are trying to cover the traces of looking at hiking the GST. They know it is going to disproportionately impact on low-paid families. Those opposite know this because they are being attacked in their own electorates at the moment. They had a chance to do something about that but failed to do it.

In terms of the cut to family payments: nationally, 1.5 million people are going to be affected, but that is nationally. Like most MPs here, I am going to focus on my electorate. That is 17,000 families that are going to be impacted by this. They are going to lose payments of $726 per child per year. They are going to be worse off.

I see those smarting on the other side, but I will tell you a little bit about my electorate. Most people know my electorate is the most multicultural in the whole of the country. We are great, diverse, very colourful and very vibrant, but my electorate is not a rich electorate. My electorate has much disadvantage. It has significant challenges. The average family household
income in my electorate is just a tad over $50,000, so this is going to have a high impact on low-income families. If the government gets their way in where they want to go with the GST and have 15 per cent on everything—on fresh food, on education, on health—that is going to have such a huge impact. It will be a double-whammy. For families that are living on $50,000 a year, that is going to be something very hard to absorb.

As I said, my community is not rich, but they do work hard. Mums and dads do a lot to support their kids. They want a bit of assistance. They do not want a handout; they do want a hand up. There are a little over 15½ thousand families in my electorate receiving tax benefit B at the moment. They are going to be $354 worse off. Single-income parents—and we have many in my community—are going to be anything up to $4,700 a year worse off, and we are expecting them to suck it up?

This government had the opportunity to take a real positive look at those in need, and they have done the reverse. They are going to propose tax measures that will be less of a burden for high-income earners than it will be for those struggling to make ends meet at the moment. It is consistent. Look what they did. The first thing they did when they formed government was attack the schoolkids bonus. I know about most people on this side of politics, but I think most of them felt the impact of this as well. When you take off parents $842 per child attending high school or $422 for a primary school kids, that significantly cuts into the budget of those who need it.

Maybe they represent electorates that do not need it—I do not know—but in areas like mine, of which I am sure there are many on the other side too, people are in need and struggling to make ends meet, and we owe it to them as a parliament to work for their benefit, no to line the pockets of those who are rich. I know much has been said about superannuation, but our first and foremost duty in this place is to look after people in need.

Mr PASIN (Barker) (16:11): Another day, another MPI, another scare campaign. Specifically, I rise to refute today's not-especially-scary scare campaign that this government has attacked the household budgets of Australians. It seems to me that the theme of the week is the not-especially-scary scare campaign.

The truth is that this so-called attack on the household budgets of Australians could not be further from the truth. This government has taken every opportunity to alleviate the suffocating tax burden imposed on family budgets by those opposite when they were in government. Not only did we repeal the carbon tax, which left family budgets some $550 better off; we have also consistently lessened the tax burden on families and provided them with more opportunity through a range of significant measures.

The coalition government delivered the Jobs for Families childcare package, giving greater choice to some 1.2 million families through more affordable access to child care. Because of the actions this government has taken to reduce unnecessary spending, we have been able to provide $40 billion—$40 thousand million—over the next four years to help the budgets of Australian households with the costs of child care and early learning. Contrary to the misleading suggestions of those opposite that this government is attacking the household budgets, we are in fact bolstering them. The coalition remains committed to supporting families.
Whilst those opposite were in government, they wrote out blank cheques and spent our hard-won financial stockpiles. It was irresponsible then and, obviously, we are paying for it now, yet even in the face of such fiscal recklessness this government remains committed to helping the household budget. Our childcare package will deliver hardworking Australian men and women the opportunity to re-enter the workforce. This government is unlocking the potential of each and every Australian family and doing so through supporting their budget, not attacking it. We know that, through delivering lower, simpler and fairer taxes, the Australian family budgets will continue to go from strength to strength. The coalition has reformed and restructured the family tax benefit to give families more money each fortnight. Whilst those opposite continue to spray misinformation and empty rhetoric about government's supposed assault on the family budget, here is the reality: 1.2 million families, or a whopping 2.2 million children, will benefit from an increase in their FTB fortnightly rates.

Those opposite are trying to whip up fear in the community. This government is in the business of addressing fears, not exploiting them. Shame on those opposite for such base political tactics. Let's get this absolutely straight. This government has decreased the tax burden on the family budget, increased support to young families through an increase in childcare assistance and delivered reforms to the family tax benefits to deliver more money to families. If those opposite think this constitutes an attack on the family budget, I would hate to see what their idea of support is. Unlike those opposite, this government acknowledge that there is not an infinite stockpile of cash. We understand there is a limit on the nation's credit card—a reality, as I said, that those opposite have difficulty grasping. There is some irony in this MPI because the member for Jagajaga, who brought it into the House, did not seem to bat an eye whilst those opposite raided the national coffers on their spending spree while they stumbled their way through government. Those opposite stole from the family budgets of our children and our grandchildren.

The coalition understands that our social compact is not only to those alive today but also to those who are yet to come. The actions we take today will echo into the lives of our children and that is why this government is maintaining its resolve to act prudently and responsibly when it comes to the fiscal management of our nation's finances. This government is supporting our families and their budgets. We are securing opportunities today through opening markets and securing free-trade agreements. This government is ensuring the prosperity of our nation is assured well into the 21st century and we acknowledge that a strong family is part of that equation. We have taken measures to strengthen our families and their budgets and it is a record that I am proud of. It is a record that has seen the creation of some 300,000 jobs since we came to government—a rate of job creation three times that of those opposite the last time they were on this side of the House. The strongest way we can support families is to ensure that there are strong, secure sustainable jobs for people to take up in the community.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): The discussion has concluded.
COMMITTEES
Human Rights Committee

Report

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (16:16): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, I present the committee's report entitled Human rights scrutiny report: thirtieth report of the 44th parliament, and I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON: by leave—I rise to speak to the tabling of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights thirtieth report of the 44th parliament.

The committee's report examines the compatibility of bills and legislative instruments with Australia's human rights obligations. This report considers bills introduced into parliament from 12 to 22 October 2015 and legislative instruments received from 18 September to 1 October 2015. The report also includes the committee's consideration of five responses to matters raised in previous reports. Nine new bills are assessed as not raising human rights concerns and the committee will seek a response from the legislation proponents in relation to six bills and four legislative instruments. The committee has concluded its examination of two bills and four instruments.

One of the bills considered in the report is the private member's bill titled Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The bill would introduce same-sex marriage. While I note that some members chose to provide a dissenting report on this bill, the majority of the committee members were of the view that the bill was compatible with the right to equality and non-discrimination, the right to family and the rights of children. These conclusions are based on a lengthy legal analysis which I encourage members to consult in detail.

The bill also engages the right to freedom of religion. It preserves the existing right of ministers of religion not to solemnise a marriage for any reason, including if this is contrary to their religious beliefs. In contrast, under the bill, civil celebrants who are not ministers of religion would be prohibited from refusing to solemnise same-sex marriages. Accordingly, the bill would limit the right of civil celebrants to exercise their religious beliefs and refuse to solemnise a same-sex marriage.

The committee was divided as to whether this limitation was justified. A number of committee members were of the view that the bill was compatible with the right to freedom of religion, as the limit it imposes on the right is proportionate to the objective of promoting equality and non-discrimination. However, a number of committee members considered that this limitation is not justified as the bill does not provide civil celebrants with the option to refuse to solemnise marriages that are contrary to their religious beliefs.

This report also includes the committee's consideration of a further response from the Attorney-General in relation to the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Foreign Fighters) Bill 2014. The committee previously sought further information as to whether the operation of the counter-terrorism laws will, in practice, be compatible with the rights to equality and non-discrimination. The Attorney-General has provided a fulsome response to the committee outlining the training provided for law enforcement officers. On the basis of...
the Attorney-General's assurance that such powers are used by officers trained to be impartial and non-discriminatory, the committee has concluded that, while the operation of counter-terrorism laws engage and may limit the right to equality and non-discrimination, particularly in relation to profiling and targeting of individuals, the powers may be justified.

The Attorney-General's response also covered the amendments in the bill allowing for the cancellation of social security payments following the suspension or cancellation of a person's passport on national security grounds. In relation to these powers, the committee stressed that the prevention of the use of social security to fund terrorism-related activities is a legitimate objective for the purposes of international human rights law. However, the committee has also sought to make constructive recommendations to improve the bill's compatibility with the right to social security and right to equality and non-discrimination. The committee has therefore suggested that the Attorney-General adopt regulations and guidelines that provide objective criteria and safeguards for the cancellation of welfare payments, including that there must be a link between the social security payment and the funding of terrorism.

As always, I encourage my fellow members and others to examine the committee's report to better inform their understanding of the committee's deliberations. With these comments, I commend the committee's thirtieth report of the 44th parliament to the House.

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

**BILLS**

**Defence Legislation Amendment (First Principles) Bill 2015**

First Reading

Bill received from the Senate and read a first time.

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

**Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (16:22):** I rise to support the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015, which amends the Migration Act 1958. This bill is about preserving the integrity of Australia's skilled migration program, and prohibits conduct relating to 'payment for visas' activity. The bill, inter alia, introduces a new criminal and civil penalty framework, which makes it illegal for any person to seek or receive a payment or benefit in exchange for a sponsorship related event.

The bill defines a benefit as:

… a payment or other valuable consideration, a deduction of an amount, any kind of real or personal property, an advantage, a service or a gift …

The bill also gives the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection the power to cancel a visa if they are satisfied that a benefit was asked for or received by the sponsor, or offered or provided by the visa holder.

This bill is in response to recommendation 10.7 of the *Independent review into integrity in the subclass 457 program* released on 10 September 2014. It said:
That it be made unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by visa applicants for a migration outcome, and that this be reinforced by a robust penalty and conviction framework.

The review, which was instigated by the then Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senator the Hon. Michaela Cash, heard anecdotal evidence that some individuals and businesses were in effect selling sponsorship to 457 visa applicants, which currently is not unlawful in Australia. This practice disadvantages legitimate visa applicants, drives down domestic wages, takes job opportunities away from qualified Australians and places affected visa holders at serious risk of exploitation and extortion. Worst of all, it undermines the integrity of Australia's skilled migration program by allowing unscrupulous business owners to gain a private advantage by circumventing Australian migration law.

The bill applies to all temporary and permanent sponsored skilled visas, and includes various visa subclasses. For visa sponsors, the bill makes it a criminal offence to ask for or receive a benefit in return for sponsorship. The bill does not discriminate with regard to corporate structures; it makes liable executive officers of corporate bodies, members of business partnerships and committees of unincorporated associations. Importantly, the bill operates extra-territorially to capture any contravening conduct that occurs outside of Australia—particularly in the visa applicant's home country. The bill also equips the Department of Immigration and Border Protection with additional investigative powers.

As I am sure is the case with all members in this House, I am frequently called upon by constituents and non-citizen residents to provide assistance with immigration matters. Fortunately, the majority of applicants and sponsors that I come across are good people who do the right thing. While the conduct of 7-Eleven franchisees predominantly concerns the exploitation of student visa holders, it does demonstrate the position of power that employers have over foreign workers, and how foreign workers can be compromised by unscrupulous employers.

The Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015 is necessary to ensure that the integrity of Australia's skilled migration program is preserved. This bill protects Australian wages and working conditions, and protects skilled visa holders from risk of exploitation. It sends a clear message both to sponsors and to visa applicants that the Australian government will not tolerate any attempt to gain a private advantage by undermining Australia's migration system. I commend the bill to the House.
ensure people are aware of what is happening; new penalties; and work on a less complex training contribution scheme to replace the one that currently operates with the one and two per cent figures that go towards training Australians. In this bill more specifically, the government has made it a criminal offence for a sponsor or other third party to ask for or receive a benefit in relation to a sponsorship and has defined ‘benefit’ as ‘any payment or deduction or any real or personal property advantage, service or gift’. There are civil penalties, and they enumerate the reality of those penalties.

I was very impressed with the contributions made by the member for Wills and the member for Dobell, but I do take up one minor point with the member for Dobell, which is crucial to the realities here. She spoke of there being some instances of misconduct by a number of franchisees of 7-Eleven. Let us get it straight, because this very example demonstrates the broad nature of our problem: it was not just ‘a few franchisees’; it was the company’s structure that basically compelled franchisees to engage in this conduct. Therefore, it was no accident that on 1 October there was the announcement of Michael Smith being appointed to a position in the company, and the departure of chairman Russell Withers, executive member Warren Wilmot and general operations manager Natalie Dalbo. Clearly this was a scheme, an operation, that meant a lot of small-time contractors who had aspirations in life came into 7-Eleven as these franchisees and then had a gun at their heads, essentially, to engage in this kind of conduct. I think it gives some indication of the size of the issue.

We of course have some very positive aspects of multiculturalism. We are up there with Israel and Luxembourg with regard to the proportion of our population born overseas or whose parents were born overseas, but we are, unfortunately, getting another statistic of international renown and that is the high proportion of temporary workers in this country. We are now speaking of a figure of one million people in this country at any one time on a form of temporary work, and, with unemployment and underemployment of 800,000, you have to ask yourself whether we have got this askew.

This is well overdue—I do not want to go into politics of Labor and Liberal—quite frankly, it has needed to be tackled for quite a while. In as early as 2010, I wrote to the then Minister for Immigration of my concerns about a practice in Harris Park, very close to where I live, where a very prominent immigration lawyer was being paid by Indian workers, who were out here, to get work experience documentation from a prominent Indian restaurant in that suburb—people paying the lawyer directly to get false histories of employment in the restaurant sector.

Figures of $50,000 are common amongst the South Indian population in this country for, basically, getting assistance towards these visas. In one instance, I heard of a case where $150,000 changed hands. I know of another situation where one lawyer, has, on at least two occasions, split $50,000 with an employer for an ENS—a 121 visa, which is now a 186 application—where the sponsoring business had already closed before the visa application was lodged. In one case, with regard to this lawyer, it was referred to MARA, the responsible agency overseeing this sector, but nothing occurred. Whether it was because of a lack of evidence or whatever, I do not know. That same lawyer acted for one restaurant owner, who owns several restaurants in the Hunter Valley, who charged at least 10 people $50,000 for 457 visa sponsorships. This is symptomatic of the realities in the sector.
A commercial kitchen employer advised a friend of mine that he lost seven Nepalese cooks in one week recently, when they all got approval for 187 visas based on scam payments. None of these people ended up working for their sponsoring regional employer. And that is another aspect of this: there is an attempt to get people into needy regional sectors; they get these visas and that is the last that one hears of them.

The scheme reflects that which operates for contract marriages, contained in sections 240 to 245 of the Migration Act. While the government has moved, and I appreciate their activity on this matter, I do not think it should be limited only to these particular types of visas. Part of what has been exposed in the Australian media, whether it is on Channel 7, ABC or The Australian, is not restricted to those specific employment-related visas. Working holiday visas and student visas, amongst many others, are being utilised in this attempt to subvert Australia's level of industrial relations conditions and to basically facilitate people's false claims to eventually migrate into this country. It should not be limited to these narrow groups of visas. I think there is some question about whether the penalties are higher. We have to look at the question of the ABN numbers, because, in that inquiry, we did say that they should not have ABN numbers. We did refer to the issue of ATO cooperation.

We have a situation where people are clearly paying sizeable amounts of money. I do not want to say, for a moment, that all of the people who enter this country under these schemes are being intimidated, are being threatened. Often you find in immigration, when people have failed cases for refugees et cetera, it is all the fault of the lawyer or the migration agent. The poor claimant was totally uninvolved in the documents they signed. That is not the reality. The main issue here we have to face is employers exploiting people, forcing them, when they are students, to work longer than 20 hours and then blackmailing them for their participation in that scheme. There are some sectors of the economy where we have areas of virtual enslavement—where people are being held under force, living in extremely substandard conditions, working many hours for which they are not paid and clearly working for under award wages and not under other immigration related requirements. There are often people involved in these cases who have come from overseas and do not mind this as long as they get a foot in the door in Australia. They are also involved in getting onshore so that a number of options might open up to them with regard to immigration. That is a bit of the reality.

We have seen a variety of allegations and exposes in this area. In The Sydney Morning Herald on 6 August—quite a while back, considering how long these exposes have been going now—Nick McKenzie and Richard Baker detailed how international colleges take cash kickbacks for helping overseas workers and students with Australian visas with fake qualifications. It is the same kind of thing. It is just not in relation to work visas.

Fairfax found that TK Melbourne Education and Training College was offered access to the streamlined visa program by the department, despite having recently been found to be in critical non-compliance—not minor infractions but critical noncompliance. In another article in The Sydney Morning Herald, Schneider Elevators was accused of secretly deducting visa charges and building industry fees from the pay of workers on temporary visas, leaving them with weekly take-home wages of between $150 and $500. When the wages were stopped the workers could no longer afford their lodging. The workers were forced to sleep on an office floor for six weeks, at which time one worker was being paid as little as $25 to $40 a week.
A recent investigation by Nick Toscano in *The Age* reported that Fair Work had uncovered that a flatbread maker, Mountain Bread, had been grossly underpaying staff working on 457 and 417 visas—mostly backpackers and international students. The investigation found that many staff at a factory in Reservoir, in Melbourne's north, had been illegally paid rates as low as $16 an hour, with no penalty rates, leading to tens of thousands of dollars in underpayments.

There has up to this stage been no specific power to take action in such cases. The bill will make these exchanges unlawful, excluding payments deemed to be a reasonable amount for professional services provided in the course of obtaining a sponsorship—for example, advice and services provided by migration agents and lawyers and for education, recruitment and so on. This is well and truly an issue of national concern. It is a situation where we are talking of, as I said earlier, tens of thousands of dollars being passed for a successful outcome. That outcome involves fraud—fraudulent claims as to whether the industry needs the people, fraudulent claims as to their status in regard to their qualifications, fraud about their pay levels et cetera.

An earlier speaker quite rightly spoke about the lack of background checks for many of these entrants to Australia. I have to say that one of the constant realities for members of parliament in high-migration areas is the extreme delays for people who are trying to bring their spouses to Australia, because the department—under Labor or Liberals—has not prioritised those cases amongst the spouse intake who have obvious security issues and basically let the others through as quickly as possible. Because of that, there are significant delays in people being reunited with their spouses. And yet we see in this field a rampant disinterest in the background-checking of people. At the end of the day, there is an agenda in this country basically to let it all hang out and make sure that we get as many people in here as possible because of sometimes genuine shortages in some sectors of the economy, but those shortages, those niche areas, are being utilised to totally destroy the integrity of the system in regard to work visas.

As I say, I think this is a good initiative from the government. It is well and truly time for it to happen. There are other things that can be done in this area to enhance integrity. We need a few people actually up there being penalised. We need a lot more lawyers and migration agents pursued. We need an investigatory unit that is effective and is properly resourced to make sure it really happens.

**Ms Price** (Durack) (16:39): Just over two years ago, this government was elected with a mandate to create safer borders and reduce the debt. I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak on the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015, which knuckles down on visa holders and their supporters and sponsors abusing the system. One of the many things this government has achieved since coming to office is stopping the boats. Some may say this is just a slogan, but I think we have proven that it is much more than that. You only need to scratch the surface and you will find that it has been a very effective policy, so effective that the Labor Party effectively endorsed this policy at their federal conference in June. As sure as night follows day, only members sitting on this side of the chamber have a track record when it comes to immigration policy and protecting Australia's borders.

This bill makes amendments to the Migration Act 1958. This bill introduces a new criminal and civil penalty regime that will make it unlawful for a person to ask for, receive, offer or
provide payment or other benefits in return for a range of sponsorship related events. Where so-called payment-for-visas conduct has occurred, this bill allows visa cancellation to be considered. This bill implements recommendation 10.7 of the Independent Review into Integrity in the Subclass 457 Program:

That it be made unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by visa applicants for a migration outcome, and that this be reinforced by a robust penalty and conviction framework.

This bill allows the department to take action in relation to payment for visas, which is not currently unlawful. Payment for visas is completely unacceptable, as it undermines the integrity of Australia's migration program and, most of all, the genuine purposes for which visas are intended to be granted. This bill will apply to a range of temporary sponsored work visas and skilled permanent employer sponsored visas, such as the 457 visa class.

A strong response is needed to ensure that these practices do not continue. This bill will strengthen the integrity of Australia's migration program, restored by this government since its coming to office just over two years ago. A strong response is needed, and a strong response is what this government will deliver. This amendment will make it a criminal offence for a person to ask for or receive a benefit in return for sponsorship, punishable on conviction by a maximum of two years imprisonment or a fine of up to 360 penalty units, which equates to an amount of just under $65,000 for an individual or $324,000 for a corporate body. These amendments will commence by proclamation on a date set by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection once this bill has been passed by the parliament.

We as a nation could not continue to have such a liberal approach to our border security as we witnessed under the previous government, which of course came at a price. During the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government they opened Australia's borders willy-nilly. This created an almighty mess for this government to clean up. This was not an easy job, but we did it because it was good for the country and it was necessary. The approach of Labor, which illustrates what poor financial managers those opposite are, left Australia with an enormous debt, even by Labor standards, and this burden is being shouldered by the hardworking people of Durack, whom I represent.

Whilst I am talking about Durack: last month I was quite intrigued to hear the Labor Party announce a commitment of more than $10 billion in new spending measures, none of which, I might add, related to regional Western Australia or, by the way, to Durack.

I call on those opposite to support this bill. Judging by what I have just heard, I imagine it will be supported, and that is to be congratulated. We all know that this will stop unscrupulous migration practices, which are undoubtedly damaging Australia's reputation abroad and at home.

We talk a lot about innovation, and today I want to take the opportunity to talk about innovation in the immigration space. Dalwallinu is in the electorate of Durack. It is some 248 kilometres north-east of Perth, in the northern wheat belt. It is a small, but very forward-thinking town.

While people are leaving the bush for the city, the people of Dalwallinu have been proactive in bringing people to their town. Light industry and services to agriculture and mining have grown, leading to a 'stabilising' population in the town rather than a decrease.
This has led to an increase in employment opportunities within the town. It has also led to the town's Regional Repopulation Plan.

The Regional Repopulation Plan aims to attract migrant families to Dalwallinu and surrounding towns. The initiative did not just allow and enable but has encouraged migrants and their families to relocate within the Dalwallinu area and assist with the area's labour shortage. The plan not only strives to retain migrants but aims to address a number of key areas, such as accommodation, education and health, to ensure that the initiative is successful. The innovative plan has been so successful that the council, the Shire of Dalwallinu, has reported a population increase of about 15 per cent. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the town of Dalwallinu and all the people involved in this fabulous initiative, which will ensure the town not only grows but prospers. And I just want to make a special note of ex-president of the Shire of Dalwallinu, Mr Robert Nixon, whose leadership has led to the increase in population in the town. Well done to Mr Nixon.

Turning back now to the bill being debated today: civil penalties are applicable to a sponsor, visa applicant or any other third party who asks for, receives or provides offers of benefit regarding a sponsorship-related event under this bill. This bill has strong deterrents, with a maximum pecuniary penalty of 240 penalty points which, as I said previously, equates to around $40,000 for an individual or $215,000 for a body corporate.

Under this bill visas may be considered for cancellation at any time where a person engages in payment-for-visas conduct. Where a decision to cancel a visa is made, family members who hold the same visas would automatically have that applied as a consequence.

This bill ensures that the department is able to take appropriate action against unscrupulous people who have engaged in payment-for-visas conduct. As with other cancellation powers in the act, visa holders would be afforded procedural fairness during the cancellation process. Someone whose visa is cancelled would have the ability to seek merit or judicial review of that decision. This bill is about ensuring that a person who initiates action or who receives money or other benefits, such as personal property, advantage, service or gift, is breaking a law and will face the appropriate consequence.

We cannot continue with wishy-washy immigration laws which essentially say that it is okay to act in an unethical way in Australia, while thousands of hard-working Australians do it tough. In conclusion, I commend this bill to the House.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (16:48): I rise today to speak about the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015.

This bill seeks to legislate measures recommended by the independent review into the integrity of the subclass 457 visa program. The recommendation was that it be made unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by visa applicants for a migration outcome and that this be reinforced by a robust penalty-and-conviction framework.

The review was limited to the 457 visa, but this amendment will make charging for a migration outcome unlawful in relation to a broader range of skilled work visa programs, namely those that have either a sponsor or a nomination element. The penalties will apply where a benefit is asked for, received, offered or provided. This behaviour would be unlawful where an inducement is offered to a sponsor in order to secure a visa or, conversely, initiated by the sponsor—for example, paying the visa holder less than they are entitled to in a
transaction for a visa or requesting separate payment in return for continuing as a sponsor. These are all complex scenarios that, unfortunately, we have found to be happening in our communities.

In fact, I think it is fair to say that as a country we have reached a tipping point in this area. There are 800,000 visiting workers in this country, and what we have seen exposed across the last 18 months is rife exploitation of some of those workers. This is exploitation of people who come to our country to work—their services have been sought—only to find that they are being exploited. They are being paid less than at Australian standards, they are working in conditions that are less than Australia accepts as standard working conditions and they are being further rorted in some cases by being asked to pay for the privilege to be exploited.

In terms of what this amendment goes to: Labor welcomes the legislation as a first step in trying to address exploitation and fraud in the visa system. It could, however, go further than this amendment put before us. It is fair to say that Australians are appalled at the levels of exploitation that we are seeing in our communities. They are appalled at the thought that employers or sponsors would be profiting from an immigration outcome sought under circumstances where working visas have been sought and provided to fill a skilled migration need. We can no longer allow our naivety in this area to be an excuse for exploitation of guest workers.

I think it is fair to say that as a broad community, across the nation we have embraced the notion of a guest worker to fill a skilled migration need but have been shocked at the organisation and the propensity to exploit the system—to game the system—and to exploit workers while they are guests in our country. I suppose I best encapsulate this by going back to my own community, where I have seen some of these cases and realised for the first time that the scenes that I have watched for many years in television dramas and movies based overseas, where workers live in horror or dependency on sponsors, are no longer a fiction in our suburbs but the reality for some people who are living amongst us.

So this legislation is a good first step, but I think it is incumbent upon us to acknowledge the level to which the rorting of the system and the exploitation have occurred. We have a history going back to last May, where workplace audits by the Fair Work Ombudsman painted a pretty grim picture. The report suggested one in five guest workers could be underpaid or working in jobs that they should not be doing. The report said there were 6,000 requests for assistance from the Fair Work Ombudsman from people on working visas in our communities—6,000 requests. It is an extraordinary number when you consider that many of the people we are talking about have limited English and limited capacity to access lawyers, particularly if they are being underpaid. When you consider the numbers of people we are talking about, on the one hand 6,000 seems a lot of people to make a complaint, but on the other hand it is merely scratching the surface in terms of the number of those who could be in these categories.

Then we saw the Fairfax Media and Monash University joint investigation recently, which revealed the extent to which thousands of temporary workers were being exploited and underpaid. This investigation exposed that 80 per cent of foreign language ads were offering wages below legal rates and that people were blatantly advertising black jobs, as they were called. It is worth noting here today that when that came to light Minister Cash's response was
wrapped around the notions of self-regulation. Clearly, when an issue has become this endemic and the exploitation levels are this high, we are past the point of self-regulation.

So I welcome this amendment, which would see some part of that exploitation process closed, because these examples demonstrate how opportunistic, predatory and brazen those operating in this area can be. When we say that, of course, we are not talking about every company, sponsor or employer who brings in a guest worker to our country, but the numbers that have been exposed are daunting and shocking. They are numbers that speak to a Dickensian element in our communities and our neighbourhoods.

Of course, this was followed up by Adele Ferguson and Sarah Danckert in *The Age*, with their expose of 7-Eleven. What we saw was endemic and systemic among 7-Eleven franchisees, with some charging staff $7,000 to secure work visas and, in fact, with the business structure set up so that that was actually a separate revenue stream for the business. We had stories of fees from $25,000 to $70,000 to sponsor someone on a visa, and we had some student visa holders then enrolled in courses associated with 7-Eleven franchisees. So we had an entire business model set up around the exploitation and, of course, the underpayment. It was set up to have someone knowingly in breach of their visa but then left in a situation where, having at first paid the amount, they could hardly be one of the 6,000 who rang the ombudsman to complain.

So it is very fair to say that Australians will welcome this amendment, which is going to close at least one of those loopholes, but of course there is another element here that those opposite need to think about carefully, and that is the changes that have been made to the English language test in this space, because of course any worker in this country filling a skilled migration gap who does not speak English is made more vulnerable, because the person that they have been dealing with, their employer, may be the only person that they can have a conversation with, and that conversation may not necessarily be in English. So they are caught, if you like, in a trap in that scenario.

For me, one of the important things that we need to say about this amendment is that we welcome the amendment and the fact that it will make it unlawful to pay for or to seek payment for an immigration outcome in this country, where we have seen it being exploited to those levels, but really one of the biggest issues it raises is around enforcement and resourcing. Of course, we can pass the amendment, but then how that law will be enforced and the resourcing of that enforcement is critical. I would say to those opposite at this point in time that one of the things that we as a country have always relied on in the space of workplace conditions and a fair day's pay for a fair day's work has been that in our civilised society we have collective bargaining and trade unions. I would say to those opposite that, when you are talking about limiting right of entry for unions, if you think about that in this space, you are actually shutting the door to a form of collective action that could in fact support the enforcement of this regime.

Labor support, as I do, the amendment that we have before us, and we believe that the initiatives in the bill are a good first step in trying to address exploitation and fraud in the visa system. We would like to see it go further. We would like to see it reflect more the recommendations of the 457 review aimed at improving the effectiveness of the visa subclass, which the government has supported but not yet implemented. That could have been introduced as part of this bill.
For example, we would like there to have been a new sponsor obligation to ensure that the cost to the sponsor of any training contribution cannot be passed on to a 457 visa holder or third party, that sponsors be required to include as part of their signed employment contract a summary of visa holder rights prepared by the DIBP and the FWOs Fair Work Information Statement, and that a change to 457 visa conditions be introduced to place an obligation on the visa holder to provide the department with their Australian tax file number. These were all recommendations that it seems to me would have been sensible to have been carried into this piece of legislation. We would also like to see, or I would like to see, further additional integrity measures for temporary work visas more generally. That should be debated by the parliament.

In my electorate, in my community, I know of cases where people have been a part of this exploitation and this gaming of our system. I am thinking of one individual that, of course, I would choose not to name in any public space because they have already suffered enough. Imagine someone with little English, someone who saw temporary work in this country as a potential ticket to a life in Australia, and imagine that that person is a woman. Imagine that person has a 10-day-old child in this country and feels indebted to their sponsor and to their employer. Imagine that person seeks help and someone suggests that they speak to their local MP. Imagine then that someone else says, 'That's a bad idea because bringing it to the attention of a member of parliament may mean that you are summarily sent home.'

I think it is important that in this chamber we understand that the workers that we are talking about are not in a position to argue their rights. They are living in a world where they do not understand the language or, for that matter, the law. They are open to exploitation. They are being exploited on our watch.

I would urge this parliament to go further than we have done with this amendment, do a thorough review of the working class visas that we have operating and bring into play measures that will give Australians assurances that, on their watch, these things are stopped. We need to acknowledge that we may have been naïve and we may have allowed a system to be established where exploitation is rife but, as a parliament, we will take actions to protect individual rights and ensure that people are no longer exploited.

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (17:03): This is an important piece of legislation, speaking as it does to the importance of integrity in the immigration system. We have widespread support for immigration in my electorate of Banks and indeed in the nation more generally. A big part of the reason for that support is the public perception of integrity within the system, and measures that are designed to ensure integrity within the system are measures that this House should always seek to support.

We do have a history in recent years of a loss of control over the immigration system—particularly as it pertained to border security under the previous government. One of the important achievements of the coalition government has been to resolve that very significant problem, because under the previous government we did see, on both a humanitarian and an economic level, a very serious situation arise with that $11 billion cost blow-out, the 50,000 arrivals and, tragically, more than 1,000 deaths at sea. So taking action to preserve integrity in the immigration system, as we have done on the borders and as we are doing with the legislation that we are discussing today, is particularly important.
My community is fortunate to draw upon a very substantial number of people who were born overseas but have made Australia their home. The community of Banks is one which is supportive of immigration but it is also a community which has played by the rules, so to speak, in obtaining Australian citizenship. It wants to ensure that others do so too, and it wants to ensure that people who are seeking to come to Australia are not exploited by unscrupulous individuals—be they people smugglers or, indeed, employers or others who would seek to exploit them.

My community has the largest number of Australians of Chinese background of any electorate in Australia. Indeed more than 22,000 people in the electorate of Banks were born in either China or Hong Kong. The incredibly rich and vibrant Chinese community in Hurstville and surrounds is one of the things that makes Banks such a special place. While I reflect on the importance of the Chinese community, I would note that the community is indeed very supportive of immigration but also certainly wants to make sure that it is done in the right way.

I would also like to acknowledge Chinese Australian Social Services, CASS, who are very active in providing a range of services in my electorate. They have provided settlement services in times gone by and indeed today as well as many other services to the local Chinese Australian community. To Henry Pan, Tony Pang, Maria Cheng and Benze Leung: thank you so much for everything that you do for the Chinese community not only in the area of settlement services but also more generally.

We are also fortunate in Banks to have a very strong community of Indian background. One of the organisations that works with immigrants from India in my electorate is RAIN, the Resourceful Australian Indian Network. Sudha Natarajan and all of the people involved in RAIN do a terrific job in welcoming people to our nation, particularly older people in the Indian Australian community who are looking for a support network and an environment in which to learn more about the local community and to interact with others. RAIN is an absolute pillar of our community. Earlier this year I held a fundraiser with all funds going to the Red Cross appeal after the tragic Nepalese earthquake. RAIN was very instrumental in supporting that event, as were many other members of the community, and made a very generous donation.

Another community in my electorate of great significance is the Egyptian community. There are about 1,500 people in Banks who were born in Egypt, many of whom have arrived in relatively recent times. I thank Bishop Daniel of St Mark’s Church in Arncliffe and John Nour, who is a senior member of St Mark’s community, and Father Soliman and Father Malek of St Mary and St Joseph Church in Peakhurst—all of whom are very supportive of the local Egyptian community and help people to both maintain their existing culture and also fully participate in our local community. There is very widespread support for immigration in my community.

Our immigration program boils down broadly to two important elements. One element is that immigration is in our economic self-interest in terms of skilled migration and so on and the other very important element of our immigration program is the humanitarian element. The humanitarian element of our immigration program has been very strongly supported by this government. One of the less remarked upon but important achievements of this government is the reopening of the special humanitarian visa category a year or so ago. That
category had pretty much come to a grinding halt under the previous government, because of
the influx of arrivals by boat. We have managed to get the special humanitarian visa program
back up to about 5,000 people per year—from as low as 500, which was what it was under the
previous government. That is a very important achievement, and it has only been achieved
because of the integrity measures which enabled those places to become available.

Indeed, in that broad area of the humanitarian program, we have recently announced the
intention to enable 12,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq to join us here in Australia. That is
something that as a government and as a nation that we can all be very proud of. A number of
community groups and church groups in my electorate have already reached out to seek to
welcome those individuals as they arrive.

But this all has to be wrapped up in a system that has integrity and fundamental fairness.
One of the problems at the moment is that it is not actually unlawful to charge someone to
assist them for a particular visa outcome. So it is possible for an unscrupulous employer or
individual to say, 'We will sponsor you for this particular visa category but, if you get the
visa, we want $20,000' or whatever it is. That is wrong, because people or entities who would
support those seeking visas should do so on the basis of a genuine and legitimate relationship
with that individual, not some spurious economic relationship. It undermines the integrity of
the program to enable this to occur.

We need to reflect on the fact that people who are applying for visas in these situations are
often people who are in quite a vulnerable situation. Frankly, the outcome of getting a visa to
enable someone to live in Australia is so dramatically preferable in many cases to the
outcome of not getting a visa to be able to live in Australia, it is understandable that some of
those applicants could be persuaded to pay someone to facilitate that process in a way which
is unscrupulous. We do not want that to happen. We do not want a lack of integrity in the
system. So, particularly with these visa classes in the broad so-called 457 category, applying
to the skilled temporary work visas and other similar related categories, we want that practice
to stop. We want to send a very clear message that this is not a minor matter; this is actually a
very serious matter. To seek to exploit the goodwill and good intentions of somebody who is
applying for a visa in Australia is something that we should not accept and should not
countenance.

As a consequence of that, the provisions in the act we are discussing today in
relation to penalties are quite strong: up to two years imprisonment
for somebody who seeks
to obtain a payment for their role in helping someone to obtain sponsorship for a visa; and
also potentially quite substantial fines of some tens of thousands of dollars.

The bill introduces an important discretionary power to enable the revocation or
cancellation of the visa itself. So in an event where the applicant has knowingly made use of
some sort of unlawful service—paying someone to provide sponsorship—there is the capacity
for the discretionary cancellation of that visa and that is entirely appropriate.

It is very important that we maintain integrity in the system at all times. When we reflect
on the 457 visa system, which this bill of course touches on, that system has been in place for
some years and it has been supported by both sides of the House, but it needs to be a system
that has integrity. There are a number of elements to it: firstly, it has to be genuine in the
sense that the skills being supplied are skills that cannot be located in the local market; and
secondly, it has to be an application which is made in good faith with the sponsors—the
people who are signing off on the application—not doing so because of some ulterior economic motive but because it is the right thing to do. That is why it is so important.

I strongly commend this bill to the House. These are important provisions. We must never forget the importance of integrity in the immigration system, and this is an important integrity measure.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (17:16): I too rise to speak on the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015. Before I move into the legislation proper, I just want to give a bit of context to our immigration scheme or the arrangements by which people who come to Australia are dealt with.

Firstly, one could break it into two groups. The vast majority of people who arrive in Australia are people with a visa. The other group is obviously people who come to Australia seeking asylum. If they come as irregular maritime arrivals they are treated slightly differently to people that may arrive by passenger vehicles or planes with a visa and then seek asylum. We do have international commitments and treaties that say we will consider an asylum seeker's claims if they are fleeing persecution. Strangely, if they were starving to death it would not give them grounds to seek asylum. That is one of the cruel realities of the globe, especially when you have nearly 60 million people displaced throughout the world—some internally in countries and others who have moved from one country to another. That is a reality.

This legislation deals with visa holders who arrive in Australia. Many people come to Australia holding a tourist visa, a study visa or a working visa. It could be as simple as the 417 visa for food picking and packing. I know there is a significant Taiwanese community in Moreton, and many people from Taiwan come and spend time fruit picking and packing and enjoying Australia on a working holiday. There is also another type of visa, the 457, a skilled migration visa, which is basically designed so that the economy gets the benefit, when we have a skills gap, of bringing in people from overseas on these temporary visas.

Unlike the tourist visa, the study visa or the working holiday visa, 457s can actually—from all but the moment they start here—start the journey to applying for citizenship. This is my understanding of it: if you come here on a tourist visa and meet an Australian and fall in love and then want to become an Australian, you would not be able to stay in Australia under your tourist visa or your working holiday visa. If you wanted to change your visa status you would have to leave the country. It might only be temporary—just go to New Zealand for one night and then come back and apply for a different set of arrangements if you have fallen in love or if you are a tourist and you like our universities and want to change to a study visa. With most visas, you come to Australia under that visa scheme and then you basically have to leave and then reapply. I think there might be a slight change if you are seeking asylum, but the vast majority of the people we are talking about have 457s.

For example, when the mining boom was at its peak there was a real shortage of mining engineers, so we had an intake of mining engineers particularly from South Africa and from a few other countries. Now, with the mining boom well and truly off the boil, the focus of any good government is on giving jobs to Australian mining engineers because there would not be a skill gap—we now have enough mining engineers. That is just a short explanation of these types of visas, particularly the 457 visa, which is what this legislation is particularly about. There is some mischief created from it.
The amendments moved by the government are sensible amendments. Labor will be suggesting some others in the Senate. Basically, the legislation before the House makes it unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by visa applicants for a migration outcome and that this should be reinforced by a robust penalty and conviction framework. It deals with the situation where a person with connections to China says to a person, ‘I will sponsor you and give you the job. If we’ve got a skills gap, I will give you the job, and you will actually pay me.’ In certain circumstances people would be so keen to come to Australia because of our higher standard of living and our great system of support, so they would say, ‘All right, I’m happy to get my wage in one hand and give a backhander to the employer or the sponsor,’ so that they are able to stay in the country because the clock would be ticking, and so they could apply for citizenship down the track. That is not what the 457 skills gap visa was intended to do—not at all. The 457 visa was designed to support an economy that was booming; it was not designed for people to exploit vulnerable people in other parts of the world.

As we saw recently with the Four Corners program looking at 7-Eleven, people on study visas can be exploited. It is easy for people to import their understanding of workplace relations from their country and what might be a reasonable wage over there and say, ‘I’m prepared to get that here in Australia.’ Obviously, that undermines the conditions of other workers. I know it is a problem. In fact, I have been talking to Ken Lai from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office about catching up with some of the Taiwanese backpackers, people who come on working holidays. Some of them have been exploited, sadly sometimes by people from the Taiwanese community who are the unscrupulous people between the farmer or the producer and hiring Taiwanese backpackers. They are paying ridiculous amounts for accommodation, paying for transport to pick tomatoes and all sorts of things.

At the moment, the government has no specific powers to take legal action against such payment for visas activities. This bill will make such activity unlawful in relation to certain skilled work visa programs that have either a sponsorship or a nomination element. We know it can be exploitative. I have heard stories. I have had people come to my office to talk about their tales of where, if they speak up, they run the risk of their sponsor sending them out of the country. Previously if your sponsor, normally your employer, severed that relationship, I think it was in 28 days you were sent out of the country.

Sadly we saw sexual harassment, employers or sponsors requesting sexual favours so that they did not deport someone, particularly if they were near the end of their time in Australia where they were close to meeting the time frame so that they could apply for Australian citizenship. Such exploitation does occur and if people are lied to about their right to join a union, it can be problematic. This legislation is designed to reduce the chance of exploitation and to protect vulnerable workers. There is a Senate inquiry currently into that.

Based upon the submissions to the inquiry which we have seen, the Labor Party are going to suggest a couple of amendments to the government. Firstly, we are seeking to apply this bill not just to 457 visas but also to persons on student visas and to persons on working holiday visas. As I said, that is something we will be taking up with the Taiwanese representative in Queensland, Ken Lai. In fact, we are going on a road trip to talk to some of the Taiwanese community who are, it is my understanding, being exploited.

The second amendment is to make clear that the penalty regime outlined in this bill—which could in some circumstances apply to the visa applicant, the employee, who is often the
vulnerable person—would not be able to occur in circumstances where it is clear that the visa applicant has been coerced by the sponsor or a related third party into offering, making, asking for or receiving a benefit, or if the visa applicant has been the subject of human trafficking, which does occur, forced labour or slavery offences under the Criminal Code. In other words, we want to protect the victims, the people who speak up about exploitation. We do not want them to be the subject of the penalty.

The third set of amendments the Labor Party will be putting forward is to increase the level of penalties for sponsors in respect of breaches of the immigration act—a further disincentive to them exploiting. The fourth amendment is to institute a new measure which would say that any person in this country who is working under a student visa or a working holiday visa would have to be employed as a person, rather than what often occurs nowadays where they say you have to have an ABN. They then have all the requirements that come with having an Australian business number. We would suggest that they should be employed under a contract of employment, to be treated as a real person. Too often people are exploited as a business. It does happen more and more where people are trying to get out of their obligations they have to their employees.

The fifth amendment is about protecting whistleblowers. We saw that in the 7-Eleven case where those brave people worked with investigative reporters from Four Corners to tell their stories. There just happened to be an observant member of the public who went to Four Corners and was able to detail this horrible exploitation where systematically—I should not say in every one of the 620 stores—there seemed to be underpayment of the 7-Eleven workers. Thousands of international students who were here to study were being exploited in the course of their work. The chairman of 7-Eleven, Russell Withers, did resign, but I do not think that is the end of this exploitation of people on study visas. So it is very important that there is a robust system of protection for whistleblowers.

The sixth amendment we will be putting forward is the requirement that the minister table an annual report about the operation and impact of the provisions introduced as part of this legislation. The seventh one is making sure that unions are part of this solution, where unions or registered employee organisations are able to undertake prosecutions for breaches of the Migration Act.

The Labor Party has come a long way in the last 130 years regarding workers from overseas; from having a closed, protectionist view to now accepting that overseas workers can play a valuable role. You talk to the organisers at the meatworkers union, and they will show you their newsletters in three or four different languages. They are happy to work with overseas workers, because obviously if everyone gets paid the right amount they are not undercutting the conditions for Australians. That is how the modern union movement is able to assist in making sure that the Migration Act does its job, which is all about making sure that people who come to Australia come here for the right reasons, that they work under the appropriate conditions; and that the exploiters—I am loath to call them criminals, but the people who exploit the aspirations of people in other countries—do not receive remuneration and do not make money off the sweat of the brow of these visa holders.

I commend this legislation to the House, particularly the robust penalty and conviction arrangements. It would be nice to see a few convictions occur so that the message is sent: 'Do not exploit these visa holders'.
Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (17:32): I am pleased to follow the member for Moreton in this debate. This legislation, the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015, touches on a matter that I referred to in a motion I had before the House just a month ago.

This legislation addresses one particular concern I had at the time and which I still have—that is, the issue of payments for visas; people were paying people here in Australia a fee in order to sponsor them to come over on a 457 visa. My view is that the legislation does not go far enough and should go much further. Indeed, that is what Labor's amendments do. The member for Moreton has just referred to all of those changes that Labor is proposing—all of which address other matters which have been identified as being problems in the current visa system we have in Australia, and all of these are matters which need to be addressed at some point in time.

I will just go through what those six or seven matters are: firstly, applying the same provision to all visas and not just 457 visas—that includes working holidays and student visas—and if time permits I will come back and explain why I believe all of this is necessary; secondly, protecting workers who have been coerced into doing the wrong thing; thirdly, increasing the financial penalties proposed under this legislation; fourthly, preventing student and working holiday visa holders from obtaining an Australian business number; fifthly, protecting whistleblowers, as we should do; and the sixth point is that the minister should be required to provide an annual report with respect to the progress of this legislation. It seems to me that if the minister does not accept all of these amendments the report is largely diminished. The last point is that of allowing unions to bring civil penalties against employers who also abuse the system.

It is increasingly evident that the visa system we have in Australia is being rorted. It is not only a result of what we have seen in the media and stories that have been followed through and investigated by different journalists. If you get out and about in the community, as I do, and speak to employers, or if you get in amongst the communities out there themselves, different ethnic groups that have come to this country, you soon work out and you soon understand what is effectively going on.

My concern is that this legislation is only being introduced by the government in response to the public backlash with respect to rorting. It is well and truly understood out there in the community but it has to date been allowed to fester. The government would not have brought this legislation to the House were it not for the exposes that have been provided by the different media personalities and investigators. My view is that it is only being done because it is a way for the government to divert attention to what is a very serious issue in this country.

Indeed, as I have said on other occasions, it probably suits the government agenda to push down wages by allowing overseas workers into Australia, because those workers, as we know, are more likely to work for lower wages. I suspect that this legislation is being brought into the House as a last resort. As a result of the exploitation of workers in this country and as a result of the rorting of the migration system and the different visas, wages have been pushed down across a whole range of sectors. That means that the nearly 800,000 Australians who are looking for work are put in a position where they are more likely to accept lower wages as well in order to get a job.
Indeed, I have spoken to families who tell me that members of their families simply cannot get a job. In one particular case, it was a young person who would have been prepared to work in a 7-Eleven, a cafe, a restaurant, a hotel or a retail outlet where the jobs were being taken by visa holders. Yet these people were missing out.

I assume the only reason the jobs were being offered to the visa holders is that they were being paid at a lower rate of pay, because otherwise I can see no good reason why that would have been the case.

The real test of the government with respect to this legislation is whether it will effect the amendments that Labor has put up, because those amendments broaden the scope of what we should be doing. We currently—when I say currently, I mean these are the last figures I was able to get—have in Australia about 106,000 457 visa holders, about 160,000 working holiday visa holders and at any given time between 300,000 and 400,000 student visas and another 60,000 or thereabout illegal stayers. I do not believe for a moment that all of those visa holders are here and legitimately complying with their visa conditions. Indeed, it is my view that many of them—even those that are not here on working holiday visas, student visas or 457s and so do not have an entitlement to work—are also working in Australian industries. Perhaps they are being paid cash in hand, but they are working and taking jobs that could otherwise be done by Australians looking for work.

A few years ago I was briefed about one of the scams going on in Adelaide. It was to do with taxi drivers coming in from another country. They were in most cases students who were supposedly here on student visas employed by the taxi owners at very low wages, housed in cramped accommodation with many people to a house and paid a very low rate. They were prepared to do that job because whatever difficulties and whatever hardship they endured here was still better than what they were enduring back in their home country and it meant that they could still perhaps save a few dollars and send them back home, which is what they were doing. But the truth of the matter is that they were being exploited and they were only being exploited because a member of their own community, perhaps—and I say perhaps because I have no evidence of this—in cohort with different migration agents, was bringing them over here and then employing them to drive the taxis around Adelaide. My understanding as a result of the briefing I had at the time is that a lot of that has been stopped because of some action has been taken.

In a similar way, I have spoken to and been on horticultural farms where fruit pickers and horticultural workers are bussed into the property by an agent who in turn collects the full rate of hourly pay for them but then keeps most of it after deducting things like accommodation expenses, transport expenses, agents' commissions and so on. Again, the workers get very little, but what little they get is still more than they would have made if they had stayed back in their own country, and so they are in no position to complain, because they were at least able to send some money back home.

What is even worse is that I have been told stories of visa overstayers working cash in hand or, even worse, working for an agent who, at the time they were meant to be paid, instead of paying them rings up the authorities and says there is a group of illegal workers working on that particular farm. The authorities come in, arrest them, put them in detention centres and deport them, so the person who was meant to pay them does not pay them and keeps all of the
money instead of just some of it. That is the kind of exploitation that has been going on with unscrupulous agents over the years.

Much of this is very difficult to prove at any one time, because no-one is about to go in and make statements. No-one is about to dob in fellow workers and so on. So it goes on, but the truth of the matter is that it also goes on because the department is probably underresourced and does not have the ability to go out there and do the inspections and monitoring that ought to take place.

If this legislation is going to have any effect, the first thing that needs to be done is to ensure that the department is properly resourced. If it is not then the truth of the matter is that we might have legislation in place and there might be the occasional time when some action is taken but generally speaking it will fail because it simply is not going to be monitored adequately.

I come to the last point, which really goes to the heart of this legislation. I have also been told by an employer that they were a substantial cash incentive just to offer an overseas worker a 457 visa contract. They did not have to do anything but offer that person a contract, and they would have been given a substantial amount of money. This was an ethical employer who was not prepared to do that and so it did not happen, but I suspect that the person who was trying to get into this country ultimately found someone else who would have been prepared to do it. So it does go on. I certainly support the intent of this legislation to, hopefully, stop that kind of practice from happening or at the very least, if it does happen, have severe penalties imposed as a result of it.

The penalties are one of the matters that Labor would like to see amended. We believe that the penalties do not go far enough. Given the amount of money that is sometimes involved in these scams—and I am talking about substantial amounts of money being paid to agents in order to get people into the country in the first place and also about the commissions and so on that I referred to earlier that are deducted from those payments—there are substantial amounts of money to be made by the scammers. Again I concur with Labor’s position on this that perhaps the penalties need to be increased even further.

The last point I want to make is that it is rare that we ever hear from employers who in turn notify the authorities about the kinds of scams that are going on. I do not for a moment believe that an employer who is employing people who are in turn being rorted is not aware of what is going on. You would have to be pretty naive. I have been on horticultural properties and in factories and I have seen what goes on. And I think if I was an employer here, I would know exactly what was going on and how the people may or may not be being exploited, not by the employer but by the agents who are bringing those employees in. Yet the employers have very little incentive to do anything about it because chances are that the employers, to some extent, are also taking advantage of the employees—perhaps they pay them a little less or perhaps they work them longer hours and under worse conditions—knowing that these employees, who, in most cases, come from impoverished countries, have very few English skills and are not likely to cause problems or complain about the employer. That is why the suggestion by Labor that the unions ought to have a role in this, in the civil proceedings, is a fair one and one that I think could make a difference. The unions may have some understanding of what is happening in their industry and therefore may be in a position to expose rorting and abuse wherever it is occurring. For that reason, it is not only a
reasonable suggestion but it would also, quite frankly, enable the government to ensure that the administration of its own policy is sound because it will have another set of people overseeing the immigration system and the process in this country.

I do not have time to talk about the seven amendments in detail as I would like to but it seems to me that if we are going to address the issues that we all know are out there—indeed, even the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, which is currently inquiring into the seasonal worker program in this country, is starting to get evidence that I think supports most of what I said—then let us do it comprehensively. The suggestions put forward by Labor make sense. They are based on factual findings and, in my view, would demonstrate the government's genuine commitment to fixing this problem.

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton) (17:47): I rise to support this rather modest bill, the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015, because it is seeking to remedy some of the problems that currently confront the application and use of temporary visas in Australia. Labor does support the bill, but we think there is a requirement to go further in ensuring that we restore confidence not only in the 457 visa area but also in other temporary visa arrangements.

I think it is also important, by way of context, to provide some brief history about this issue. Of course the last piece of legislation enacted in the previous parliament went to introducing labour market testing for 457 visas covering a significant number of occupations under that particular scheme. At the time that was being proposed in this place, it was opposed vehemently by the then opposition, the now government. They voted against the proposed legislation but nonetheless the legislation was enacted and it became law. Notwithstanding the promises of the then opposition and even of the shadow minister for immigration—the now Treasurer—to repeal that legislation, I am glad to say that the government has not moved on its intentions to repeal what was very important legislation to protect not only the interests of the 457 scheme but also to protect the interests of workers in this country who are looking to find work at a time of growing unemployment.

It is also important to note that the arguments that were waged against Labor for introducing that bill referred to us as xenophobic and racist—very similar to the arguments recently waged against us by the trade minister when we raised legitimate concerns about the deficiencies of ChAFTA with respect to labour mobility. Again, happily, we managed to settle on some of the matters in that particular recent disagreement. Nonetheless, it does show that the government has, on occasion, resorted to quite extreme and unfair language when seeking to have a conversation about this very sensitive and very significant area of public policy. Equally—and I think it is also important to note—even though we were attacked at the time for introducing the legislation, not only has the government not sought to repeal that legislation but the trade minister and others have used that legislation as a defence as to why there were sufficient protections currently in place domestically to protect against any of the problems that might arise as a result of entering into a trade agreement with China. So it has gone from a full-on attack to supporting, it would appear, at least on the face of it, legislation that was introduced in June 2013 by the previous Labor government. I believed then, as the former immigration minister, as I believe now, as the shadow minister for employment and workplace relations, that there was still more work to be done in this area.
It is fair to say that the proportion of people in our labour market who are under temporary visa arrangements is very significant today compared with yesteryear. Fifteen or so years ago you might have seen one per cent and possibly up to two per cent—but I do not think it would even reach that far—of people on temporary work arrangements. Today, of course, we have a proportion that is heading towards 10 per cent of our labour market. Some have said it is less, but, on a closer examination, we find that it is close to 10 per cent. Some would argue that it is 800,000 or in excess of one million workers who are on those arrangements. Therefore, I think it is important we have a regime in place that not only protects the interests of those people who have been subject to exploitation but that also prevents unfair downward pressure on employment conditions in this nation because of the misuse of the scheme—that is, using the 457 arrangements when there is not a shortage in particular areas of our labour market, not paying the requisite income to 457 visa applicants and not actually employing them in the job that was on the form that was filled out and provided to the department of immigration. There was a series of significant abuses of the scheme.

We found out even more about that before the last term ended when we—that is, the former Labor government—empowered the Fair Work Ombudsman to investigate breaches of the 457 visa scheme. Indeed, the recent report by that independent agency found some very significant breaches, I would say widespread breaches, of that scheme. These were reported by that body to the minister, and they have done some very good work in the circumstances. If you think about it, if we had not empowered the Fair Work Ombudsman we would have had the department of immigration, with the very scarce resources that it has, dealing with very significant matters and having to continue to deal with this issue alone. Far fewer inspectors work for the department of immigration than work for the Fair Work Ombudsman, so it was a very good reform—increasing manyfold the resources to look at breaches and to respond to allegations of misconduct, exploitation and abuse of people. Again, we are glad to see the government has not sought to change that, although we were criticised at the time it was introduced.

But as the shadow minister for immigration has said in his contribution to this debate, we think we can go further than just the bill itself. As previous speakers have noted, the bill will make it unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by a visa applicant for a migration outcome, and that this be reinforced by a robust penalty and conviction framework. That is the recommendation of the independent review established by the current government into the integrity of the subclass 457 program, and we think that recommendation can be realised by the enactment of this legislation, and that is a good thing. Again, given there are examples of people who are on these visas seeking to game immigration—that is, willing to pay to be on a 457 visa or pay part or all of their income just so they can come to this country and not for the purpose under the particular visa that would apply to them—we also think it is important that this legislation will seek to remedy that arrangement. Just like we have seen education as an export industry being gamed for immigration purposes, so to have we seen examples of gaming here where people have sought to rort the system, if you like. This legislation introduced by the government will go some way to remedying that issue.

One point in respect of that current recommendation, and it something we will be seeking to amend in the Senate, is that the penalty should not apply, cannot apply, to a visa holder who is found to be coerced by the sponsor or a related third party into offering, making,
asking or receiving a benefit. So while we say that of course there should be criminal penalties apply to the sponsoring employers if they have done the wrong thing intentionally, and potential civil breaches and penalties apply to an applicant who is misusing the scheme, we would also say that if someone has been forced into that situation or has made decisions under duress, then we would not want to think that the minister would use his or her power to penalise that person. We do not believe that is the intention of the legislation. It may well be, but the government can clarify that for us or they can accept the amendment as will be proposed by the opposition in the other place when it is being debated there.

Among other things that I wanted to add to this debate, and this is by way of a question to the government: I wonder why there has been no movement on some of the other recommendations of the independent review? For example, the independent review talked about imposing a training levy on employers, which I think is a very good thing. It is something that should be considered. One of the reasons we use temporary visas is because of skill shortages. There should also be a policy intent to ensure that employers understand that we are also obliged to train our own workforce. It should not become the first option to be looking elsewhere when there are 800,000 people unemployed, and many more underemployed. We think the training levy not only can act as a form of affecting the way in which people might make this decision, because it will be a cost to the employer, but it is also a cost that is consistent with the policy approach that is certainly taken by Labor and hopefully by this government.

The review also recommended a tripartite body be established, an advisory body. We wonder whether in fact the government may want to contemplate—given Malcolm is waxing consensual about wanting to talk to all and sundry these days about everything, and he keeps referring to the ACTU in dispatches, he might want to consider, therefore, given it is a recommendation of his own review, including unions along with employers and other bodies on a tripartite advisory body to advise government on these matters. It is something that we had in the past. It was repealed by this government, but it should be considered again. It is a recommendation of their own review, and if the Prime Minister's words mean anything to him, then it is something they should consider.

Apart from those recommendations that have already been made to government by its own review, the shadow minister for immigration has also referred to other amendments we intend to move in the other place, including expanding the scope of the bill, expanding the provisions of the bill, so that it applies to all work related visas—sponsored or nonsponsored, including working holiday and student visas. If you were to look at the highest profile stories that are in the public realm about the exploitation of overseas workers on visas, most of these examples are actually not about 457 visa applicants. They include 457 applicants but the majority of them happen to be those on student visas and working holiday visas. So it would be remarkable that we would not seek to broaden the legislation to include penalties in cases where employers employ a particular worker who may be on one of those other two visas and seeks to get money from them in a particular way. Why wouldn't we consider issuing some penalty to them? I understand the review was confined to certain matters, but I think this piece of legislation could certainly look at broadening the oversight of these penalties to those areas.
We also believe that there should be an increase in penalties for sponsors. The proposed penalty for employers or visa holders complicit in asking for, offering, making or receiving a payment for visas should be increased. Sponsors convicted of an offence under the act should also have their ability to sponsor new visa holders suspended for a maximum of two years. Recidivism is rife in this area, and, to prevent repeat offending, I would have thought that we would bring in stronger penalties for those who have already committed offences so that they do not factor in the penalty into their business model—’We'll be penalised, we'll cop the penalty, we'll continue offending’. We should make sure that there is an increased penalty for intentional and repeated breaches of the provisions of visas and of this legislation.

Given the tenuous hold that we have on people who are on temporary visas, we think that those on student visas and working holiday visas should be prohibited from obtaining an ABN and therefore prevented from acting as a contractor or subcontractor. We believe it is far better for it to be a relationship of undertaking work pursuant to the work visa arrangements than one that is an employment relationship. Again, we think that is something the government should entertain. This would reduce the risk of exploitation, and I think for that reason—(Time expired)

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (18:02): I, like all of my colleagues, support the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015. I also endorse the comments made by previous speakers that this bill does not go far enough.

Today, I wish to talk about a problem that is going to be coming to us down the track. Now that we have entered into multiple free trade agreements—the Japan-Australia Free Trade Agreement, the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement and the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement, and I will not necessarily incorporate the Trans-Pacific Partnership in this, because I am not familiar with the labour movement of people provisions within that document—I want to make some comments about an issue that I anticipate, and other people are anticipating, will arise particularly from the KAFTA and the ChAFTA agreements.

These comments are in relation to the provisions within those documents that relate to the supply of contractual services. We know that there are an ever-expanding range of occupations, certainly not just managerial professional but a very broadly defined range of technical skills that are caught within these free trade agreements for which there is, very explicitly, no labour market testing. I am not talking, at this point, about those things that are subject to the IFAs, because we did get some modest labour market testing requirements incorporated into that, but about those substantial provisions of KAFTA and ChAFTA where, indeed, there is no labour market testing. It may even apply with the IFAs, because the provisions for labour market testing have been so modest.

This arises around the sale of jobs. The legislation that we are contemplating makes it illegal for people within Australia to engage in conduct that you might describe as selling a job. There is some capacity for some extra territorial application of this legislation, both in terms of the criminal and the civil provisions, but they are constrained. The real bulk of where we are going to see this problem emerge, in my view, is not going to be captured at all by this legislation.

I know from talking to people who routinely do business in China that there are many jobs that are for sale—for example, if you wanted to get a job at the Shanghai port—I am not necessarily talking about the senior executive positions—one pays someone for that job. This
is repeated, as I understand it, in many areas within China and very often when—as I have personally witnessed throughout South-East Asia—there are Chinese projects where they bring in their own workforce, their entire construction team. For example, in East Timor the Chinese aid projects, such as building the presidential palace and building foreign affairs departments, involved a totally Chinese workforce.

Now, it is very possible that there could be—and I am not making the allegation in respect of those particular projects, but one would be naive to think that there would not be, in some areas—the sale of these jobs. People who are obviously very desperate and very keen to get the opportunity of working in Australia for Australian wages would be prepared to pay an agent or a prospective employer for the opportunity to take on that job. As far as I can see, even looking at those provisions that give some extended extraterritorial reach, in this legislation we are not necessarily going to be able to prosecute this sort of conduct. Imagine that we have a project that is going to be developed by a Chinese company, a company that is resident and registered in China. It or certain executives perhaps of that firm engage in conduct that would see those jobs effectively being sold. The jobs that involve coming to Australia and delivering the project in Australia—that opportunity being a very marketable asset—could be sold.

When I look at this—and I note the ministers’ advisers there, and I would be very interested to see—I hope I have got this wrong. When I look at the extraterritorial provisions, those companies would not be able to be prosecuted in Australia. They would not be able to be fined. I think we could deal with this. We could deal with this insofar as making an amendment, perhaps, to the Migration Act such that, if they are bringing people in under contractual services arrangements, there is some requirement for them to be registered in some way within Australia so that these provisions, the reach of this protective legislation, are available.

I do not want to become overwrought about this particular problem, but I understand from reading the literature on these cases—and I have no capacity to judge whether or not it is a fair and reasonable assessment of the cases—that this is something that is going on and that we are seeing around the world something that is almost approximating a system of indentured labour. A person buys a job. They or their family then become obligated in their home country to pay either the employer—who, being a foreign national, is not necessarily captured by this legislation—or a third-party provider in a foreign country, who is not captured by this legislation. They are required over a period of many years to pay off a debt that is incurred by virtue of their entering into this employment opportunity in Australia. There are some who say that we risk going back to a situation of indentured labour, which was endemic throughout South-East Asia and indeed for some time in Australia.

Again, I do not want to be overwrought about this, because I do need clarification on this extraterritorial reach, but I do think we need to flag this as a problem. We need to flag this as a problem that arises out of the fact that now the 457 visas that can be granted for the contractual services—indeed, possibly even the IFA—may become assets to be sold in another country to people desperate to make a better life for themselves and understandably wanting to take this opportunity. We view these workers as being paid the equivalent of Australian workers, and that is very important, but we cannot guarantee to what extent they
may in their home country in fact have a big debt bond that will be required to be paid by them or by their family.

I just want to flag that as something that I think is an issue that we are going to have to deal with, that we are going to have to grapple with, over the next couple of years because it will be a serious issue for us. I think there is a great naivety that is often shown by proponents who say: ‘Why would these foreign employers want to bring in their own workforce when they can employ Australians? They don’t have to fly them over.’ As I say, we know that at least part of the answer is that there is the capacity to benefit from the sale of the jobs. It is not the worker that is necessarily getting the benefit but indeed the proponent, or it might be people acting illegally within the proponent company but nevertheless getting the benefit of selling these jobs and really undermining the protection that this legislation purports to give us.

With those comments, I will leave it, but I just say that I think that we need to have a much greater watching brief on how the importation of overseas workers occurs under these new free trade agreements.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (18:13): I am pleased to add my contribution to this debate on the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015 because there are serious issues with the 457 visa program and the way that it operates in this country, particularly in an environment of higher than average unemployment, which has been rising over the past couple of years. I have had many representations from constituents regarding some of the issues associated with the 457 visa program. Most notably, I have sat with workers in the IT industry who worked for large insurance companies and banks for many, many years and were made redundant, only to be replaced in their jobs by 457 visa workers. In the ultimate insult, they were asked to actually train up those workers that took their jobs.

The number of occupations on the 457 visa list has grown exponentially over the past two years, particularly since it was established. I do not believe that it represents the original purpose for which it was established and that there are a number of issues with it. This bill deals with one of those issues, and that is the issue of an applicant being paid in return for a visa outcome. The bill implements a recommendation of the independent review into the integrity of the 457 visa program, namely that it be made unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by visa applicants for a migration outcome, and that this be reinforced by a robust penalty-and-conviction framework. This bill implements that conviction framework, and I support that implementation. But there are other areas that this bill could deal with, and many of those problems have been illuminated over the past couple of weeks with the negotiation of the China free trade agreement and the Korean free trade agreement.

The independent review found that some sponsors in the 457 visa program had been paid by visa applicants in return for a visa outcome. Now, this is clearly a fraud. It is not the basis upon which that visa program was established. We all know that many of the 457 visa workers are aiming at permanent residency, and to use this channel and to manipulate the system in this manner is unconscionable. It is pleasing to see that the government is finally acting on this.

The bill also introduces a new civil penalty provision which will provide for a fine to be imposed on visa applicants or holders, or third parties, who offer to provide or who do provide a benefit as part of a payment-for-visa arrangement. Finally, the bill introduces new
discretionary powers to consider cancellation of a temporary visa or a permanent visa where the visa holder has engaged in payment-for-visa activities.

I believe that these reforms are a good first step, but that they do not go far enough. There is clearly further work that needs to be done by the government on improving the temporary work visa system that operates in Australia. We have seen over recent weeks, highlighted through the debate that has occurred with the China free trade agreement and the Korean free trade agreement, that the provisions are not operating in the way that they were intended to when they were set up. And they are being manipulated in certain industries by certain employers and by other applicants.

Labor believes that there are other areas where we can make a difference—where we can tighten the system to ensure that it again reflects the original intent for which it was established. Many of those suggestions—helpful suggestions—were made during the recent Senate inquiry into this bill. Based on the submissions to the inquiry, Labor, through the member for Corio, the shadow minister, has proposed a number of amendments to the bill that would mean it applies to all work-related activity visas, including working holiday and student visas. This comes on the back of the high-profile incidents, including those involving 7-Eleven workers, which highlighted the conduct targeted by this bill as occurring not just with sponsored visas but also with student and working holiday visas.

In that particular case we have seen manipulation and exploitation of workers under temporary work visa programs, contrary to Australian law, to ensure that there was undercutting of wages and conditions that Australian workers ordinarily receive for doing this work. There have been a number of cases highlighted in the agricultural industry of manipulation of temporary work visas in that particular industry; again, employers and contractors—people who provide services to bring people into Australia on these temporary visas—manipulating Australian laws and ensuring that people are not paid the appropriate wages and conditions when working under Australian awards and in concert with Australian laws.

The amendments that the shadow minister has proposed will ensure that penalties cannot be applied to a visa holder found to have been coerced into offering, making or receiving a benefit. The minister should also be unable to cancel the visa of a person subjected to human trafficking, forced labour or slavery offences. These amendments go to resolving the unintended consequences of this bill. Again, these are some of the issues that were highlighted in the Senate inquiry and which we believe are important issues. If you like, they are ancillary issues that have been associated with this bill but which do, nonetheless, need to be fixed. Labor believes that the recommendations of the committee and the amendments that have been proposed by the shadow minister will deal with these.

I also believe that the original bill and associated penalties are too low to have the desired effect. While the bill provides for criminal fines of $64,800 or civil fines of $43,200 for individuals, there is evidence that the windfall from committing offences such as those that are the subject of this bill—paying for a migration outcome—can be as much as $70,000, and up to $700,000 for a sponsor dealing with multiple visa holders. So, clearly, the penalties that are proposed in this bill are manifestly inadequate. They do not deal with the issue that has been identified by the inquiry and they do not deal with the issue with an effective enforcement mechanism to ensure that these practices do not continue into the future. If we
are going to make this bill strong and if we are going to make this bill worthwhile we need to make sure that there is no financial incentive for applicants or employers to engage in these fraudulent activities. And we are not going to do that with the measly sums that have been suggested by this particular bill.

We have also proposed that workers on student and working holiday visas be prohibited from obtaining ABNs and that whistleblowers who report instances of charging for sponsorship related events should have adequate protections, including amnesty from visa cancellation. This deals with the case that we have seen, again, coming through the evidence of the inquiry and anecdotal evidence that I and my colleagues have received of individuals being asked to obtain Australian business numbers, or ABNs, and set themselves up as businesses to avoid some of the scrutiny and the obligations that are imposed on visa holders as workers when they come into Australia under temporary work visas. We believe that adequate protections—including amnesty from visa cancellation, flexibility in finding a new sponsor and allowing complaints to be made to the Commonwealth Ombudsman when the Department of Immigration and Border Protection may have a conflict—are other sensible amendments that can be made to this bill.

Under Labor’s amendments outlined by the shadow minister, the minister for immigration would also be required to table an annual report with regard to the impact of the legislation, while civil penalty proceedings should be able to be brought by unions relating to worker exploitation to increase the resources aimed at addressing this behaviour. So these are two further measures that we have suggested that will improve the operation of the temporary work visa system in the country. One is ensuring that there is greater transparency in the way that the system works, because we all know that there is a clear lack of information, particularly for new applicants when they are coming into the country, and there is a clear lack of credible information about how the system is actually working. You get these conflicting reports. We saw it in the debate regarding the China free trade agreement, where there were words in the side deal that was done by the Minister for Trade and Investment in respect of investment facilitation agreements, saying that there will not be any labour market testing for people coming into Australia to work on projects over $150 million in value, but the minister came out and said, 'No, that's not the case at all; there will be labour market testing.' On my reading of that side deal, there was not labour market testing, and that is why Labor moved some very sensible amendments to the general operation of the migration laws, and thankfully those amendments were adopted by the government, because they are sensible amendments that strengthen the operation of these provisions. So greater transparency and greater reporting and accountability to the parliament on the operation and impact of this legislation will be worthwhile, as will allowing unions to operate in the civil penalty regime, as they do in many other jurisdictions, most notably in workplace relations, occupational health and safety, and workers compensation jurisdictions. It ensures that you have additional enforcement and additional eyes on the operation of the scheme to ensure that it works and meets its intended aims.

In conclusion, I support what is proposed in this bill. My view is that it does not go far enough. There are further reforms that can be made, because this will not deal with a number of the issues that will be ongoing. I commend the shadow minister for making the
recommendations that we have made, and Labor will have more to say on this issue in the lead-up to the next election.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (18:25): Mr Deputy Speaker, we are just sorting out our speaking arrangements. We are just so enthusiastic on this side to tackle the government on the deficiencies in the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015. While we are looking a little bit messy, and I know it is bordering on disorderly of me, I want to recognise my daughter Grace, who is in the gallery this evening with her very good friends Sophie and Oliver. This is the first time I have had the opportunity to recognise one of my children in the gallery since my maiden speech in 1996. Given that that anniversary is just around the corner, it is very nice to do so again today. Grace has just become very famous with an appointment to the local commercial radio station as a journalist, and I get to officially congratulate her as a member of parliament this evening.

This is a very important bill, and the integrity of the 457 visa system is critical to the Australian economy. Therefore, we in the Australian community must have confidence in the system as we know it. It is bordering on outrageous that there is no sanction available under our law for applicants for 457 visas who might seek to bribe, in effect, a sponsor under the relevant act. Of course, we welcome the fact that the government has agreed to rectify that situation, but, as the shadow minister has indicated, we believe a lot more needs to be done to further build the integrity of the scheme and to restore public confidence. I will not go through those additional changes; the shadow minister has done so quite eloquently, and they are on the record.

I represent a mining electorate and have a very good grasp of the importance of mining to the Australian economy. Of course, in this place I am the spokesman for the opposition on matters of agriculture, and, as the previous speaker said, there are few areas in which the integrity of the visa system is more important than agriculture. So I have a deep-seated interest in this subject.

We have enough difficulty explaining to the Australian community that from time to time we will need to supplement our skilled labour in this country to do the things we need to do to further build and diversify our economy. We are a small island continent of between 23 million and 24 million people. Many of the projects that land in Australia, particularly some of the bigger mining projects and particularly some of the bigger iron ore projects, are very lumpy in their nature. During the construction phase, as we saw during the recent mining boom, the demand for skilled labour is very intense but short lived. So there will be times when, by necessity, we will rely upon the importation of skilled labour, and the Australian community, I think, struggle with that concept from time to time. They see a relatively high unemployment rate, deficiencies in our vocational education programs, and even a lack of competitiveness in our higher education infrastructure, and they struggle to understand why this is necessary. They have an expectation that their politicians will minimise our reliance on imported skilled labour, and I absolutely understand that. But, picking back up on my earlier points, the very nature of our country, our population and our economy means that from time to time, no matter how much better we deal with our skills formation and the improvement in our learning institutions, we as a country will always rely, in part at least, on the importation of skilled labour.
So, if we are to hope to persuade the Australian people of that point and to then maintain community confidence in the skilled visa programs, we must work together to ensure that the integrity of those programs is without question. This is a concept, or a principle, which very much applies to the recent debate we had in this place, and in the broader community, about the China free trade agreement. I think it is a settled issue now that the labour market arrangements under the China free trade agreement were less than optimal. Indeed, they were looser—for want of a better term—than those that were found in other free trade agreements and those which apply to our skilled migration program generally.

For the opposition to acquiesce on the China free trade agreement without challenging those provisions would have been a mistake on many fronts. The most obvious mistake, of course, is the impact on the Australian labour market—in other words, the unnecessary displacement of Australian workers by those from other countries. There is also the lack of confidence that might have driven in not only that free trade agreement but also other free trade agreements we might enter into in the future. It was important for the opposition to highlight those deficiencies, to stand its ground and to argue its case publicly. I think it is settled now that out there in the community the opposition was gaining very broad and majority community support for our campaign to make those changes. But the ongoing building of confidence in the system is the critical point here.

The Roy Hill mine was a subject of much debate when we were in government not that long ago. It is a very good example of the incapacity of a company, or an individual investor or a group of investors, to progress such a large project without being able to demonstrate to the financiers of that project that not only is the iron ore there, the volume there, and the right price there over the course of maybe the next two decades. It is also necessary for them to be able to persuade their bankers—who might be in London—that they will be able to secure the skilled labour necessary to get the project through the construction phase.

It is very helpful to be able to turn up to a London house and say, 'I have an agreement with the Australian government which assures me, if I am unable to secure the skilled labour I require in Australia, that I will, with great certainty, be able to import that labour into Australia.' That is a very small but, I think, succinct example of the importance of having certainty in the system and why we need to have a 457 visa program. It is also a reminder that if we are to continue to rely upon them we do need community confidence. This amendment that the government has agreed to this evening will go a long way toward that. Again, we believe we need more and we will continue to pursue improvements in the program.

I touched on agriculture. I have spoken a little bit about mining. Agriculture is increasingly becoming a capital intensive activity, and in many ways that is a good thing because it will increase our competitiveness in international markets. The dairy industry, for example, is highly automated these days. But increasingly the skills required for the agriculture sector to go up the value curve and to be internationally competitive are increasingly hard to find; and as a country we need to do more about that locally. That fact is that we have an ageing workforce in agriculture and the learning institutions which have traditionally provided those skills in the agriculture sector are not getting the interest from applicants that they were in the past. I have always said, 'Young people will come back to agriculture when they think there is a quid in it,' and I still believe that is true. But I think there is a role for government to strengthen our learning institutions, our course work and those things that will build the skills...
we need in agriculture if we are not going to be too reliant on the skills of others from other countries in the future.

The opposition welcomes the government’s decision to support the cause for the sanctions against those who seek to pay sponsors for a 457 visa. But, as outlined by the shadow minister, we think there is a long way to go yet to produce an optimal outcome in this area of public policy, and we will continue to pursue those in the future.

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (18:35): I am pleased to make a contribution on the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015. No Australian wants people who are working on a legitimate visa to be exploited. Australians have legitimate expectations that all workers will be paid Australian wages and enjoy Australian wages and conditions. The House will be aware of the recent coverage on Four Corners which revealed that the 7-Eleven chain was underpaying its workers in more than 600 stores, or allegations to that effect. This is not right in Australia in the year 2015. No worker should be exploited. That is why Labor supports this bill and will be moving several amendments in the other place which enhance and improve the bill and widen the scope of protection for workers.

Section 457 visas allow non-citizens to work in Australia where there are skills gaps in the labour market. My colleague the member for Corio rightly made the point that these types of visas must be strictly confined to the work they are meant to be doing and the workers must not be exploited and abused as a type of cheap labour. Labor therefore welcomes the government’s moves to create further protection for workers. This bill implements a recommendation from the independent review into the integrity of the 457 program—primarily that it should be made unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by a visa applicant for a migration outcome and that this should be reinforced by a robust penalty and conviction framework.

It is particularly remarkable that we are debating this now. The 457 visa system has been around for over 20 years. The fact that we are only now debating a law that makes it unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by the visa applicant for a successful migration outcome shows that this system is still in dire need of reform if we are to continue this system with the full trust of the Australian people.

Under the current provisions, the government has no specific way to take legal action against such a payment for visa activity. This arises where a benefit is asked for or received in return for a migration outcome. Thankfully, this bill does provide that such an activity is unlawful regarding certain skilled work visa programs that have either a sponsorship or nomination element. And that is fair enough. The ostensible aim of the 457 visa system is to fill short-term skills shortages in a particular firm. It is not there as an entry path to permanent migration, and there should be no incentives in place where the temporary skilled migrant pays the employing sponsor for a particular outcome.

As I said previously, Labor welcomes the fact that the government is acting in this area, but we will be moving amendments in the Senate to improve this bill. Labor will propose that the provisions of this bill be applied to all work related visas, including working holiday and student visas, and not just be confined to 457 visas. It is difficult to argue that some classes of workers should be protected from exploitation and others not; yet this is what this bill does by demarcating between 457 visa holders and other forms of working visas. The 7-Eleven
scandal shows that workers on all types of visas are affected by some scurrilous individuals and are worthy of protection by the provisions in this bill.

Labor will also move amendments to ensure that penalties cannot be applied to a visa holder who has been coerced by the sponsor into offering, making, asking or receiving a benefit. Workers should not be punished for being exploited, and it is important that amendments to that effect are supported. Labor will also move to increase penalties for sponsors who engage in this unconscionable conduct and also to put in place provisions which ensure that workers on student or working holiday visas are prevented from having an Australian business number to ensure that they cannot be employed as contracted or subcontractors. The final amendment relates to whistle-blower protection and for the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection to provide an annual report about these new provisions in the bill. So, as far as it goes, the bill is a step forward and it is important to support it, and Labor will proudly support it. But it does not go far enough, and we will be moving amendments to strengthen and broaden it and improve the oversight provision.

Like many other Labor speakers in this debate, I now want to move on to some general reflections on the 457 visa system. The 457 visa system has been the subject of a lot of debate—recently as a result of the China free trade agreement, but it is an issue that comes up regularly. If it is to continue, the Australian people need to have confidence in the system. They need to have confidence that it is working appropriately to fill short-term skills shortages and that it is being enforced properly—and that starts with politicians understanding how the system works.

My grave fear is that the China free trade agreement demonstrated that those opposite, the coalition government, do not understand the system. They do not understand how it works in practice. They do not understand the loopholes in the system and they do not understand the implications of the changes they made in the China free trade agreement. For example, labour market testing does not apply to Chinese 457 visa holders who come through the chapter 10 movement of natural persons. This is not in the industry facilitation agreements. Thankfully, Labor closed that loophole and now labour market testing must apply in that area. But, for chapter 10 movement, which is for all 457 visa holders who are approved individually in ASCO levels 1 through to 4—so the traditional 457 visa system—no labour market testing will be applied. That is of real concern.

Unfortunately, we could not touch it without affecting the trade agreement. The Minister for Trade and Investment got sold a dud. He got presented with a choice. The Chinese wanted freer movement of capital and the ability to purchase Australian agricultural property and other forms of land at the same level as our other trade agreements specified. He was not prepared to do that, because the National tail that wags the coalition government would not allow it. Instead, he sold out Australian workers by removing labour market testing, so that Australians are not required to be given first opportunity to win these jobs before an employer can then apply through the 457 visa system. Labor made some significant improvements in the agreement, and overall the agreement was worth signing and approving through parliament, but that is a loophole that unfortunately we could not fix entirely because of the way the agreement was negotiated by the minister for trade.

The broader 457 visa system is in need of deeper reform. At a recent Senate estimates hearing it was found that 20 per cent of the visas Fair Work Australia monitored in the 457
visa system were either not being employed against the position that they were applied for or were being paid incorrect salaries. Let me repeat that: of the 1,500 visas that Fair Work Australia inspected, 20 per cent were not compliant. If we extrapolate that to the number of 457 visa holders in this country—which is 105,000 primary 457 visa holders—that would apply to 20,000 visa holders not being paid the correct salary or not being employed against the position for which they have been brought into the country. That is incredibly problematic, because that points to exploitation on a mass scale. That they are being paid a lower salary than they should be or are being employed against a position that they should not be is not only bad for the migrants but it also undermines Australian wages and conditions. That is incredibly concerning and it reflects a system that is deeply in need of reform.

This is goes to why some employers use the 457 visa system. Recent studies have shown that a significant minority, about a third, of employers who use the 457 visa system do not use it to fill short-term skills gaps—which is ostensibly the purpose of this system. They use 457 visas because employees under these visas exhibit certain behavioural traits that they like, primarily due to their dependence on the sponsoring employer. So one-third of 457 visa employers surveyed identified limited mobility for the 457 visa workers and a perceived higher commitment to that firm as reasons for bringing in those workers. It is incredibly concerning that a third of employers under this system surveyed—and it may not be a representative sample, and I hope to God it is not—are not bringing in these workers to fill a skills gap; they are bringing them in because they are seen as more compliant. That is why more and more Australians have concerns and doubts about the 457 visa system.

That is problematic because we do need temporary skilled migration to this country. We need employers and companies to have the ability to fill short-term skills gaps, but to do that the Australian public need to be satisfied on a range of issues. Firstly, they need to be satisfied that there is a genuine skills shortage. Secondly, they need to be satisfied that the employer has long-term plans in place to do the training so that Australians can do the jobs. Thirdly, they need to be satisfied that Australians have had an opportunity to win that job—that there has been genuine labour market testing and a not a 'tick and flick' exercise, which, unfortunately, is what occurs all too often through this process. Fourthly, they need to be satisfied that migrants who come in under this system are paid the fair market wage. I think there is a strong argument to increase the tiers very significantly, if not across all industries then at an industry-by-industry level, so that it is a genuine market wage. Fifthly, the Australian people need to have confidence that there is adequate enforcement. As late as only a year ago, there were only 37 inspectors overseeing the 457 visa system. That has now increased to 300 but those 300 inspectors not only have to oversee the 457 visas but they also have to oversee the entire industrial relations system.

More reform is needed. I am going to be a champion within my party of that reform because we do need temporary skilled migration in this country, and I absolutely support that. I support genuine employers who do the right thing having access to the program, but we need to have the system watertight so that we do not see the abuse and exploitation we are seeing now that gives the system a bad name, that exploits migrants and undermines Australian wages and conditions. I commend this bill to the House. I think it urgently needs to the passed, but it needs to be passed with Labor's amendments.
Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (18:46): It is a great pleasure to follow the member for Charlton. He is a passionate advocate of justice in this area, and it is justice that the Labor Party seeks—justice and a fair go not just for Australian workers but for workers all over the world. We believe in a wages system and an immigration system that protects Australian workers and protects guest workers who have come to work in this country under various visas, whether it be a 457 visa, a student visa or a backpacker's short stay visa. This is an important bill. It is important to say to the government that we welcome it. It is a good idea for them to make it unlawful that a sponsor be paid by visa applicants for a migration outcome and that there be a robust penalty behind that framework—that is an important thing.

The Senate Education and Employment References Committee on 19 June 2015 heard evidence from some nurses. I know, because when I was in the Health portfolio I took a particular interest in what happens in nursing—that is, we have thousands of nursing graduates every year who are unable to find work in Australian hospitals and unable to get their graduate position. They often move between states when they cannot find a position in their own state, but they are sometimes unable to get a job or a graduate position at all. There are up to 3,000 graduate nurses who cannot get a spot in Australian hospitals, but at the same time we have a number of nurses coming in under 457 arrangements. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation is not against 457 visas. The 457 visa holders often become members of the federation. They often end up becoming permanent residents or citizens of the country and are often the strongest unionists you can find. But there is this concern, of course, that when there are people graduating from university—having paid for their degrees and having had the public make a contribution as well through taxes and through the higher education system—we cannot match up those graduates with graduate positions in our hospitals. It is a very serious matter that we should all be concerned about, and it is very important to the health pipeline.

Interestingly enough, the Senate committee heard some evidence from Mrs Alferaz, who was a 457 visa holder. According to the Senate references committee Hansard, on page 16, she was charged a fee of ‘between $2,000 and $3,000’ that was ‘simply monies that the employer sought for the privilege of supporting the 457 application.’ It was a nursing agency that sought that money. There is quite a bit of evidence there, including from Mr Blake, who was giving evidence on her behalf. He said:

… in Mrs Alferaz's case, during her time of employment with the same aged care employer, she sought the employer's support for an application for permanent residency and was told, 'We will support you, but it will cost an additional $3,500.'

So we have a situation there where it is not just the 457 visa that is up for a fee, but also permanent residence of Australia. Nobody in this place would think that this was a fair state of affairs or a just state of affairs. She was, incidentally, also underpaid while she was here to the tune of $65,000, which is a concern in and of itself. This lady, Mrs Alferaz—I believe she was a nurse from the Philippines—came to our country to work, was underpaid, and then faced demands for money to get a visa and to get permanent residence.

This is clearly not what we would anticipate would go on with Australia's immigration system. This should be fundamental to our character as a nation. We regard ourselves as believing in a fair go; it is a very tightly held belief in our character. We believe that we are a fair country. And it is not just a matter of belief. Any Australian on the main street out there,
in Gawler, in Sydney or in any part of this country would regard the idea that employers or
sponsors or people in third countries should be profiting from our immigration system and our
visa system as totally repugnant. It is absolutely a stain on our national character and it is a
stain on our industrial relations system because here we are saying, 'We're a fair country. We
believe in a minimum wage. We believe in award conditions.' Frequently we have politicians
on both sides getting up in this place and talking about that, yet here we have a visitor to our
country, a guest worker in our country—and that is what 457 visas holders are. They are guest
workers. This is not a skilled migration program anymore. It has morphed into a guest worker
program and that is what the backpacker visa is morphing into. It is morphing into a guest
worker program where people are not here for holidays at all. They are not European
backpackers here to do a bit of fruit picking but rather there are organised labour hire
companies bringing people in from various countries and systematically using of them in
labour hire. The same is happening with student visas as well.

These are very serious issues. I do not want to bore people with headlines but The
Australian on 6 August said, 'Australia Post contractor arrested in alleged student visa scam'.
There we have not just a very large Australian employer, Australia Post, but a government-
owned entity which uses labour hire companies where the contractor was arrested for not only
defrauding the Commonwealth but also for falsifying documents such as police checks and
student records. So there is profiting not just at one end of the system, not just off the backs
of the labour of students who are in this country, but profiting the other way, charging them
for a course as well, in effect, turning our student visa program into a scam. That is just not
acceptable.

The idea that major employers would be willing participants in this in that they do not have
systems in place to prevent it is an absolute outrage. If major employers, including
Commonwealth-owned entities think they can get away with saying, 'Oh well, we had an
audit system. It was a subcontractor. They told us they were doing the right thing' and then
dusting their hands off and away we go, if they think anybody is going to believe that or cop
it, that may happen the first time around but not forever. I say to major employers in this
country that you had better have your audit systems in place and they had better be real audit
systems to catch these situations because if they are revealed in the press and they are
revealed to the parliament, you should not expect that there will not be a response.

Ben Schneiders and Royce Millar—I have not always agreed with these two reporters but
they have done a good job revealing in the Sydney Morning Herald on 2 October 2015 under
the headline 'Black jobs: rampant exploitation of foreign workers in Australia revealed', the
ads that are now online all of which breached the minimum wage. What are student visa
applicants, foreign backpackers and people on 457 visas supposed to think about Australia
when they find that they are treated in this way, that we say up one thing and we do another,
that they are brought here with the expectation that they are coming to a developed country
with good laws and good outcomes for workers and they are treated in a manner that is not
consistent with our laws?

On 23 June this year, ABC News, 'Asian workers told to lodge bogus refugee visas at
Baiada poultry plant; workers afraid to speak out.' Again, here we have Malaysian workers at
Baiada's poultry plant in Beresfield, near Newcastle, charged up to $3,500 by a labour hire
agency to file an application for a protection visa. It is just extraordinary. I am glad the government is responding with this bill but these headlines demand a robust response.

I note in the case of Baiada and in the case of many of these employers they have made undertakings to the Fair Work Ombudsman and I think that is a good thing, but I say again: employers have to be aware that their corporate reputation is something to be valued and they do not want to be associated with the practices which I think we all would regard as completely abhorrent.

Labor’s amendments are good amendments. The government is in this brand new spirit of policy discussion, listening and having a bit of a free for all on tax and a whole range of other areas. I am not sure whether they have any new policies in the Abbott-Turnbull, but we have good amendments which should be adopted, amendments that expand the scope of the provisions of this bill to all work-related visas, sponsored and non-sponsored and including working holiday and student visas. You only have to look at 7-Eleven and some of these other cases to know that, if you close the loop holes for 457 visas, the characters who are exploiting this visa classification, they will simply move to other visa categories and seek to profit from those. With all this regulation we are now learning, sadly in a whole range of areas, that you need to have things as tight as a drum.

Our second amendment relates to criminal offences and civil penalties. It is important to have criminal penalties in this, not just the cancellation of visa. We want to have increased maximum penalties in terms of imprisonment and in terms of fines and I think it is important to lift those to make it quite clear to all concerned that that will not happen. We want to make sure that workers on student visas and on working holiday visas do not get ABN numbers. That was a feature, I think, of the goings on at Australia Post—they were all on ABN numbers and were in theory contractors. It was certainly so in the case of Baiada poultry where people were defined as subcontractors.

In terms of our amendments, we want to protect whistleblowers. It does not seem sensible to put the visa holder in a position to seek redress under the industrial relations scheme but they then have to lose their visa. That places them at such a disadvantage; they would never present themselves to authorities in that situation. So we want to make sure that these guests in our country, these guest workers, are treated decently and that they are not the ones who pay the penalty; they should not be sent packing because of some of these employment relationships and scams that go on in this area.

We want to make sure there is a report by the minister to this parliament. I think this is terribly important. As the member for Charlton said, this whole area demands a bipartisan response, but certainly a response from the Labor Party. It is our intention to protect Australian workers and foreign workers, so it is important that we have that information.

Finally, we want proper investigation and compliance, and that includes civil penalty proceedings being able to be brought by unions in these cases. People opposite want to pummel unions, but often—and I know this to be the case in terms of the NUW in South Australia—they are the people who are blowing the whistle on many of these situations. They are often the people who are doing the good work exposing some of these rorts.
So it is important the government consider with haste our amendments. I suggest they adopt them all. I certainly hope that we find some agreement across the chamber and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (19:01): On the mosque open day a week or so ago, I went down to the Gallipoli Mosque and was chatting with some of the Turkish-Australian community, which is very large in my electorate of Parramatta. I was reminded of one of the great stories of Australian migration, the Turkish migration of the late sixties, when Australia needed workers. And we needed a lot of them. We negotiated with the Turkish government to bring in a whole range of workers from Turkey. The Turkish government only wanted to give them to us temporarily; they wanted to take them back. We argued that we wanted to keep them, and we engaged, as Australia often does, in one of the great permanent migrations.

My community throughout Auburn and down through Granville, which is incredibly successful and a wonderful addition to our country, moved here in those times. So I am a great fan—and if you live in Parramatta you must be—of permanent migration. We have an extraordinary community of workers of all kinds that we needed at various times in our history, including the great IT migration at the height of the IT boom.

But the 457 visa is almost the opposite. It is the temporary visa that allows people to come to Australia for a particular reason, for particular periods of time, to work and then leave and go back to their home country. These 457s also fill an incredibly important role in this country. As a system that serves Australia well, it needs to be protected from the kinds of dreadful stories and behaviours that are circulating now.

You can see really clear examples of where 457s totally work. In the recent construction boom in mining, a mining company would require, say, 12,000 workers to build the mine and then only 2,000 workers to operate it. There is no way in the world a country like ours could train that number of workers for such a short period of time and then have them back on the unemployment lines again with nowhere else to go. In circumstances like that where we need workers to come in temporarily and fill a skill gap, 457 visas are incredibly valuable.

But I would like to remind the government—if members on that side have not been talking to their constituents about this—that there are a lot of people in our community who are currently extremely concerned about 457 visas and the way they are working. That is a bad thing, because we need our community to have faith in a system we need to work well.

The rumours that we hear and the stories that they tell me seem to be backed up by the submissions in the recent Senate inquiry and in the examples that have been exposed by members on this side in their speeches earlier tonight. We hear and we know that there are workers on 457 visas who are here because they can be paid less or because they can be employed under worse conditions. And they are treated that way. I meet people when I am out in mobile offices—who will not tell me their names and will not tell me where they work—who tell me they are being paid very low wages and being charged for rent and being charged to be here on 457 visas. This is appalling behaviour by employers but it is very difficult to get workers to come forward.

It is not a surprise when we find out that that behaviour extends through other areas as well. But on the 457s alone, I commend the government for introducing this bill to the House. It does something in its current form which is quite simple. Up until now, it has not been
illegal to charge a worker to work for you on a 457 visa. We know there are employers that are doing that; they are literally saying to an employee, 'You pay me and I'll give you the visa', not the other way around. We have employers who we know are paying wages and then charging enormous amounts for very low-quality accommodation out the back in a container. We know employers are ripping off workers appallingly under 457s. We also know that one in five in a recent audit were non-compliant. That does not mean that all of those one in five were behaving this badly but it does mean we have a system that is appallingly exploited by some and disregarded in absolute terms by many.

So it is a good beginning for the government to make it unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by a visa applicant for a migration outcome, and for the government to enforce that provision by a robust penalty and conviction framework. That is the intention of this bill and that is a very good thing. I think it would probably surprise a lot of Australians that the behaviour that I described, of essentially enslaving people who are dependent on you to keep their visa, is not illegal at this point. But it will be when this bill passes the parliament.

We on this side of the House believe it is just a beginning and would like to see it go much further. For a start, we know—and I think all Australians know—that this exploitative behaviour does not just extend to 457s. We have seen it in the 7-Eleven case, and for those of us who talk to our constituents a lot it is probably not a surprise that students are being exploited. I remember that, when we were first elected in 2007, we had extensive exploitation in the student visa category and we had a lot of cleaning up to do over about the first two years of our government. That was not pleasant for us or for the people involved, but we did it. So it is not a surprise to find that students are still being exploited. We hear the rumours of restaurants paying $5 an hour or even asking people to work for free as a condition of their student visas. It is a common story and very difficult to prove, because people will not come forward because they are afraid of losing their visa if they do, but we hear of those stories.

We also have seen the expose of working holiday visa holders being sexually harassed, asked for sexual favours and exploited on various properties around Australia as well, so the exploitation that 457 visa holders endure appears to be flowing through a range of other visa holders as well.

We in our amendments, which will be presented in the Senate but I would like to talk through now, propose to expand the provisions of the bill so that it applies to all work related visas, sponsored and non-sponsored, including working holiday and student visas. Again, the Australian public needs to have confidence in these visas. They need to believe that these visas are not being used to drive down the wages of Australians or to exploit people who come here in good faith and provide a role which we need them to do. We actually need people to come and work in those regional areas. We need people to come and fill in the skill gaps. We as a nation would be appalled to think that we are exploiting people in that way. We are a developed country and we are better than that.

We seek to expand the scope of the bill. We also seek to protect visa holders who have been coerced by the sponsor and are including an amendment that says a penalty, including cancellation of a visa, cannot be applied to a visa holder who is found to have been coerced by the sponsor or related third party into offering, making, asking for or receiving a benefit. Similarly, the minister should not be able to cancel the visa of a person who has been subjected to human trafficking, forced labour or slavery offences under the Criminal Code.
We are also seeking to increase the penalty for employers or visa holders complicit in asking for, offering, making or receiving a payment. In other words, if the employer or the visa holder is complicit in this, we think the penalties the government is suggesting should be increased. Currently in the bill, the criminal offences have a maximum penalty of two years or a fine of $64,800 for individuals and $324,000 for corporate bodies, but there is evidence that the financial gains from committing these offences can be as much as $70,000 for an individual visa holder and up to $700,000 for a sponsor dealing with multiple visa holders, so the rewards for a person exploiting these visa conditions are extraordinary and the penalties in this bill do not match the reality of the return to those who are doing the wrong thing.

We are also looking to protect in particular student visas and people on working holidays from being forced to act as contractors and subcontractors. We are suggesting that people on student visas and working holidays be prohibited from obtaining an ABN and therefore prevented from acting as contractors or subcontractors. This would help reduce the risk of exploitation by ensuring that the visa holders work under a contract of employment, and in the case of students it would also enhance the ability of regulators to confirm that they are working the appropriate number of hours per fortnight, consistent with their visa conditions.

We are also seeking increased whistleblower protection so the whistleblowers who report instances of charging for sponsorship related events should have adequate protections. This would further enhance the penalties introduced by the bill and do more to reduce the exploitation of vulnerable workers.

We are also asking that the minister table an annual report on the operation and impact of the provisions. The bill does not currently impose any reporting obligations on the minister, and such a requirement would enhance the accountability and transparency of the system and act as an additional deterrent to sponsors.

We are also asking that civil penalty proceedings be able to be brought by unions in relation to the existing offences and civil penalties section of the Migration Act and the new civil penalty provisions. The model used in the Fair Work Act is the recommended approach. Allowing unions to bring civil penalty proceedings relating to worker exploitation will increase the resources applied to addressing this behaviour.

I strongly urge the government to consider improving this bill by adopting these amendments. Their bill is a good start but we have a long way to go on this, and 457 visa holders are not the only ones who need protecting. We have seen the treatment of the 7-Eleven workers. That is the one that has been exposed. Rumour and evidence to the Senate inquiry indicates that it is far more widespread than 7-Eleven alone, and we as a nation can do much better in protecting those who come to Australia in good faith to work for this country at a time that we need them. I strongly commend the amendments to the government.

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (19:14): I rise to speak in support of the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015. The substance of this bill is important. By getting the policy settings right, we will protect the rights of workers in all our communities. My electorate of McEwen in the north of Melbourne includes farming areas like Seymour. Because we are lucky to have such a vibrant, closely connected, multicultural community, we are all about ensuring that our workers are not exploited, no matter where they come from—whether they are Australian or working under a visa. Concerns have been raised in the electorate regarding the exploitation of overseas workers.
who are paid at lower rates and employed with lesser conditions than those of Australian workers. In most cases, the individual with the working visa is not aware that they are being underpaid until they speak to people in similar occupations or to industry unions. I guess this was the case with the 7-Eleven workers who have been spoken about so comprehensively throughout this debate.

As I said, we need to get the policy settings right, and this can only occur through proper legislation. The framework must ensure that the rights of workers are protected and upheld. The amendments that Labor have put forward will go a long way to ensuring that outcomes delivered by this bill are both fair and effective. The Abbott Turnbull government, on the other hand, still have not implemented one of their own recommendations: the delivery of policy options to protect vulnerable foreign workers. This is all becoming much too predictable. The Abbott Turnbull government announces it is going to do something, and then it fails to deliver. They are stacking up; they are things like the NBN, the Medical Research Future Fund and now policies to protect workers and Australian employment conditions.

This bill will be strengthened by the proposed amendment to expand its scope to all overseas workers, whether they are on 457 visas, working holiday visas or student visas. Strengthening the penalty regime associated with the bill demonstrates to workers, employers and families that we take the issue of workplace rights and conditions very seriously. Increasing the penalty amount for visa sponsors found to be in breach of the Migration Act will have some deterrent value. Including specific provisions that remove the liability of workers who are victims of exploitation is fair. This measure, along with the increased protection for whistleblowers—one of the most important things that we can do—will encourage victims to speak out. By doing that, by allowing and giving people the opportunity to speak out, we will be able to work very closely on removing the scourge of people being exploited by employers.

The proposal for the minister to table an annual report about the operation and the impact of the provisions of the bill will help to evaluate its overall effectiveness. Evaluation of the provisions of this bill, along with the associated transparency that an annual report will provide, would become increasingly important as our free trade agreements—the TPP, the ChAFTA and any other bilateral agreements—are rolled out.

With higher unemployment in Australia and higher-than-average unemployment in my electorate of McEwen, it will become even more important for the government to consider more recommendations coming out of the Azarius review. A key recommendation was to establish a tripartite ministerial advisory council, which would include the government and representatives from unions and employer movements. The role of that council would be to consider in what circumstances—where and when—it would be appropriate for 457 visas to be issued.

Having an oversight body like this would limit the opportunity for exploitation to occur and ensure that informed decisions are able to be made for Australia's workforce planning—that is, we could identify which areas have skills gaps and then consider ways to plug those gaps. If the need is immediate, do we need to bring in overseas workers? If it is not too immediate, do we undertake retraining and reskilling of the Australian workforce? There are plenty of people out there who can be retrained and reskilled—people who have been affected by this government's decision to shut down the automotive industry, putting many thousands
of people out of work. In fact, I think if you look there would be nearly hundreds of thousands of people who are out of work in the automotive and ancillary industries.

These are important decisions, and it is reasonable to assume that a tripartite council could make the right decisions for Australia's future. I would like to think that a workforce planning strategy that supported local Australian workers would be a key platform of any employment framework.

The initiatives in this bill are a good first step in trying to address exploitation and fraud in the visa system. But the further measures and amendments that we have suggested will only strengthen the overall effectiveness. By supporting this bill, we not only take steps to protect workers on visas but also take a real step towards protecting employment and workforce planning for Australia's future in a transparent and accountable way.

There have been many stories relayed tonight about foreign workers who have been asked to pay as much as $70,000 up-front. People who have left countries like India to study hairdressing here in Australia, who have worked hard to support themselves and a child while they have studied, but who find out at the end of it that it is difficult to find a job. And then they are told, on applying to potential employers for full-time work under a 457 visa, that they need to front up with $50,000 to $70,000. That is not right, it is unfair, and we should be doing everything we can to stop these things from happening.

We only have to look at the transport sector to see the issues that we have with people who are out here being underpaid, not getting the proper wages and conditions that they should expect and being forced to live in cramped accommodation that is just inappropriate. As previous speakers have mentioned, people are being forced to live in shipping containers. This has happened right across this nation. I have seen it out in Victoria, where people were brought in to work on large trailer manufacturing. They were paid next to nothing; they were charged exorbitant rates to live in shipping containers and have their food supplied and things like that. These people have been exploited just so business can make huge profits on the products that it makes.

We need to stop this. We need to make sure that it does not continue, and that is why I think that we need to support the amendments that the opposition has put forward. It is one giant step in making sure that this scourge of people being exploited that faces our society is ended. With that, I support the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck—Assistant Minister for Health) (19:22): I thank their members for their contributions to this debate. The purpose of the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill 2015 is to amend the Migration Act 1958 to introduce a new criminal and civil penalty regime that will make it unlawful for a person to ask for, receive, offer, or provide payment and other benefits in return for a range of sponsorship related events. The bill also allows visa cancellation to be considered where the visa holder has engaged in such conduct, referred to as payment for visas conduct.

This bill reflects a key integrity recommendation of the Independent Review of Integrity in the Subclass 457 program:

That it be made unlawful for a sponsor to be paid by visa applicants for a migration outcome, and that this be reinforced by a robust penalty and conviction framework.
This bill will apply to a range of temporary sponsored work visas and skilled permanent employer sponsored visas, where payment for visas conduct is known to occur, including the 457 visa, the 186 visa and the 187 visa. The practice of giving or receiving a benefit in return for visa sponsorship can have serious detrimental effects, including: making vulnerable noncitizens liable to exploitation, reducing employment opportunities and putting downward pressure on wages and conditions for citizens and permanent residents in Australia, allowing persons who receive payment in return for sponsorship to inappropriately make significant financial gains, and adversely affecting the integrity of Australia's migration program.

Payment for visas conduct is not currently unlawful. It is, however, unacceptable to the government and the Australian people, because it undermines the genuine purpose for which visas are intended to be granted. This bill will strengthen the integrity of Australia's migration program by deterring payments for visas conduct and allowing action to be taken where such conduct has occurred. The regime of offences, civil penalties and discretionary visa cancellation provided for in the bill will allow the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to take action across a spectrum of noncompliance, depending on the seriousness of the payment for visa conduct and the remedial action that is appropriate to particular circumstances.

The proposed amendments protect Australian workers, because they ensure that overseas workers who are employed in Australia and who may eventually gain permanent residence do so on the basis of their genuine skills and the need rather than because they have paid their employer. The proposed amendments protect overseas workers from exploitation by sponsors who threaten to withdraw their support in the visa or employment process if payments are not forthcoming. Employment opportunities in Australia should be earned not sold, and the employment of foreign workers should not act to undercut Australia's wages and conditions. The bill ensures that the department is able to appropriate action against unscrupulous people who have engaged in payment for visas conduct. I commend the bill to the chamber.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr WYATT (Hasluck—Assistant Minister for Health) (19:26): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr WYATT (Hasluck—Assistant Minister for Health) (19:27): I move:

That business intervening before order of the day No. 8, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.
Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr MARLES (Corio) (19:27): I rise to speak in support of the Migration and Maritime Powers Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2015. This bill deals with remedial amendments in respect of two pieces of legislation which went through this parliament last year. The first is in respect of the Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Act 2014, which was introduced into the parliament on 24 September last year and was assented to on 10 December last year. This was a bill which, at its heart, strengthened the character test and, in doing so, sought to provide added protection for the Australian public by enabling the minister to have greater discretion to remove noncitizens who had committed crimes and represented a risk to the Australian community. We supported that bill then, and all but one of the amendments in the current bill relate to it. As a result, we support this bill now.

The other amendment deals with a remedial amendment in respect of the Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Act 2014, which was introduced into the parliament on 25 September last year and was assented to on 15 December 2014. This legislation had many schedules, the first of which—which is the one that is being remedially amended by virtue of this legislation—sought to strengthen the legal position in relation to intercepting vessels on the high seas. If you like, it provided more legal ballast to the policy of the government in respect of turning asylum seeker vessels around in the journey from Java to Christmas Island. It is perhaps worth stating Labor's position in relation to this. We acknowledge that what we saw over a number of years with the loss of life on the journey between Java and Christmas Island was a very significant human misery, which we are absolutely committed to being brought to an end. There is nothing compassionate about seeing people drown at sea. The regional resettlement arrangement, which the then Rudd government put in place with both Papua New Guinea and the Republic of Nauru, established a regime of offshore processing which was perhaps the most significant step that was taken by any government in relation to ending the journey between Java and Christmas Island. It was a very important measure, which undermined the business model of people smugglers operating out of Jakarta.

There are many issues that we have with the way in which the regional resettlement arrangement has been operated by this government. We support the principle of it and we support the role that it has played in bringing an end to the loss of life at sea, but we do not support the way in which this government has managed offshore processing in Australia. We do not support it in terms of the lack of transparency which exists. We believe that there should be a negotiation with both the governments of Nauru and PNG to establish independent oversight of these facilities as soon as possible. We are deeply concerned about a number of decisions that the government made in respect of the conditions that pertain to the offshore processing facilities on Nauru and Manus—specifically the decision to keep people living in tents on Nauru, which represented a decision not to complete the construction of the facility on Nauru, is an absolute disgrace. It is effectively a decision to have people, relative
to what had been planned, live in worse conditions than they would otherwise have done. Against all that is done globally in dealing with refugees, that is an extraordinary decision for a government to take.

We are and have been concerned about the state of the medical facility on Manus Island, which, to be fair, has now been remediated; but, for a long time, an inadequate medical facility existed there and we did see a person lose their life, Mr Hamid Kehazaei, from what was a preventable condition. Perhaps most significantly, the fundamental question of resolving the fate of the 2,000 people on Nauru and Manus has yet to be solved or addressed by this government. I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a future Labor government would make it core business to resolve the fate of the 2,000 people on Nauru and Manus and to get those people off those islands.

The regional resettlement arrangement was a key component of bringing an end to that journey, but another component has been the policy of turning boats back to Indonesia on the journey from Java to Christmas Island. The bill that went through last year provided the legal ballast for that, and the bill that we have before us today, as I say, provides some remedial assistance in relation to that. It is essential that we make sure that we do not alter any of the policies which have brought to an end the journey between Java and Christmas Island. There is nothing compassionate about people drowning at sea, and it would be utterly wrong for any future government to put people smugglers back into business—people smugglers who are right now largely out of business in Indonesia. We are absolutely committed to that. We absolutely understand that maintaining a policy of turning back boats is fundamentally critical, in conjunction with the operation of offshore processing, in keeping this journey shut. We do that, I might say, from the point of view of compassion. We do not want to see that journey start again, with the inevitable consequence of the loss of life.

Because we are driven by compassion, back in July we announced a series of measures which also sought to have a much greater global engagement around the question of humanitarian affairs, including a significant increase in our funding to the UNHCR were we to be elected to government, a doubling of Australia's humanitarian intake were we to be elected to government and playing a leadership role within South-East Asia in a humanitarian space were we to be elected to government. All of that gives expression to our commitment to compassion in the humanitarian space, but an aspect of that is making sure that we do not see people drowning at sea between Java and Christmas Island and so the set of policies that we have in place are important in respect of that. The legislation that was passed last year was important and the remedial amendment which forms part of the legislation before us tonight is an aspect of that as well.

I do, in saying those generalities, want to go to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1 of the bill provides for consistency with respect to deportees who, for one reason or another, find themselves returning to Australia. Currently, where a destination country refuses to take in a person who has been deported from Australia, they are able to lawfully return to Australia without a visa. Indeed, bars which have been in place which prevent them from making further visa applications remain in place. In other words, they come back to Australia in the circumstances as if they had never left. But if their journey overseas is disrupted for some other reason—for example, a flight has to be returned or there is some issue in relation to their being in transit—then prior to this legislation going through they would in fact return to
Australia on different conditions. They would not be able technically to return to Australia lawfully without a visa. So what schedule 1 seeks to do is to fix that issue and make sure that all persons who are deported but for one reason or another find themselves returning to Australia do so on the same footing. It is estimated that there might be about five people a year who fall into the category that I have described, and so that is an important issue to resolve.

Schedule 2 goes to the question of the phrase 'character concern' as it is used within the legislation. Character concern is a threshold which provides for those who meet it to have their personal identifiers shared with other agencies throughout the government. What this seeks to do is align that threshold with the threshold that exists in respect of the character test, which means that there is much greater consistency within the legislation. Schedule 2 also deals with decisions under sections 501BA and 501CA. These decisions are decisions of the minister which deal in essence with people who are serving an existing prison sentence and they deal with decisions—if I can put it in this way—down the review process or down the review line. The important point to make in respect of this bill in relation to those decisions is that it puts those decisions on exactly the same footing as ministerial decisions made in respect of people failing the character test under subsection 501(6) of the act. That does represent the original intent of the legislation that was passed last year and does provide a much greater degree of consistency throughout the legislation.

Part 1 of schedule 3 deals with the question of what information needs to be provided and what grounds need to be asserted by somebody who seeks to invoke Australia's protection obligations. Under the character test legislation that was moved last year and that we supported, there was a requirement that the grounds an applicant seeks to rely upon for their protection application need to be put up front. This amendment seeks to make that case in respect of applications which are also made on behalf of other persons. The most likely example of where that would occur is where applications are made on behalf of minors by others. Again, this brings the legislation into a much greater state of consistency and much greater compliance with the intent that was expressed, as this bill went through the parliament last year.

Part 2 of schedule 3 deals with decisions that are made under the new fast-track applications under the new Immigration Assessment Authority. This provides that decisions which are made where there is a refusal on certain character or security grounds are able to be reviewed by the AAT, and that is obviously a desirable thing to occur. It also makes clear that where there are visas which lie dormant behind an active visa that is being relied upon, where that active visa ceases to operate, this provides that the dormant visa also ceases to operate. Again, the likely scenario where that would occur is where there is a bridging visa which sits in the background; again, that is a sensible amendment to make in order to make the act much more consistent.

Finally, schedule 4 deals with the maritime powers that I was describing earlier. These amendments which passed the parliament last year, as I described, sought to provide a greater legal ballast in respect of the policies that the government seeks to implement at sea. Specifically, what this amendment seeks to do is to ensure that maritime powers are lawfully exercised when Australian vessels are operating within the full scope of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. To give you an example of that, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker: if
you can imagine an Australian vessel which is engaging in peaceful passage through the territorial waters of another country and is consistent with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, what this amendment seeks to ensure is that acting in such a way any exercise of maritime powers that have been done throughout that part of the journey are maintained and are not contaminated, if you like, by virtue of the vessel having passed through the territorial waters of another country—provided that it is all been done in compliance with the Australia's international obligations and particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

All of these amendments, as you can tell from the explanation I have given, are quite detailed and technical. We do support them in this place and we do so consistently with the position is that we have taken here and the positions we have taken publicly. We would note that we have referred this legislation to a Senate inquiry, and that is the appropriate course to occur with a matter as detailed and technical as this. We obviously reserve our position in the Senate until we see the outcome of that Senate inquiry. We acknowledge that these are remedial amendments to primary legislation that we now support and, as a result, we support this bill in the House this evening.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (19:43): I rise to at some remarks to the Migration and Maritime Powers Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2015. I thank the member for Corio, as he leaves the chamber, for his support for the bill as well. Madam Deputy Speaker, I must say it is great to see you in the chair in this chamber. I would also like to provide the House with some context and comment to the changes being made.

With approximately 37,000 kilometres of shoreline, Australia's migration and maritime powers remain of the utmost importance in maintaining border security. As a nation, Australia is able to offer some of the best levels of education, health care and welfare around the world. It is a highly appealing country because of its willingness to give everyone a go, regardless of their background, and our propensity for backing the underdog. All of this has contributed to the diverse society that we can be so very proud of. To maintain all that we have achieved as a nation, there is a need for the bills and amendments like these to ensure we are able to maintain our freedoms and strengthen our nation as a whole.

I refer to the Migration Act 1958—not a bad year to be born in. In the decade preceding this act, Australia had participated in World War II. Following the cessation of war there was a prevailing attitude among Australians that we as a nation had to 'populate or perish'. As a result we began to look towards northern and eastern European countries, which had been ravaged by war, to provide migrants in numbers sufficient for us to populate as we required. In the 10 years following the end of the war—1945 to 1955—Western Australia's population alone increased by 169,000 people, and this influx, to some extent, continues today. There is broad support for a strong immigration program in this country, as long as it is through legal means.

As Australians, we celebrate the moment when immigrants commit to Australia and its values and become Australian citizens. On a local note, I was very pleased to attend another citizenship ceremony at the City of South Perth last week, which gave me an opportunity to congratulate 79 people of the electorate of Swan on officially becoming Australian citizens. According to the latest census, almost 48 per cent of my constituents were born outside Australia. In the eight years I have been a member of parliament, I have noted the relative harmony that everyone within my electorate lives in, which, in my view, is down to a strong
commitment and love of Australia. We enjoy our great diversity throughout the year with community events that include live music, food stalls and performances. It is always a pleasure to be a part of these local events that acknowledge just how important our history of migration is—not only to the electorate of Swan, but to electorates across Australia. Migration has played a major role in the development of local communities and still continues to do so.

Today, though, I want to discuss why we must remain vigilant in adjusting and improving migration and maritime laws so that we are able to maintain and protect our way of life. The amendments in this bill will play a key role in strengthening and clarifying the legalities of the legislation to ensure the removal of any inconsistencies which could potentially threaten the way of life that all of us in this place strive hard to protect. The amendments are necessary improvements that will further this government's ability to safeguard Australia's national security and the lives of every Australian. The coalition government has a solid reputation and proven track record in achieving this, with our strong stance on border protection in regard to those who attempt to seek entrance into our country illegally.

The coalition has again and again demonstrated its ability to maintain our country's border security. Operation Sovereign Borders has been a very effective policy which has stopped the boats and actively deterred illegal immigrants and people smugglers—something the current opposition struggled with, moving from one failed policy to the next, during the previous period of government. I must admit it was encouraging to hear the member for Corio talk about his commitment to the protection of our borders and that we must not allow people to drown at sea anymore. To hear that from the shadow minister is very encouraging.

The amendments made in the migration and maritime powers bill are both timely and extremely important to Australia's national security. The amendment bill is an omnibus bill which effectively covers a range of technical issues and significantly improves its role in government policy.

Schedule 1 ensures that when an unlawful non-citizen is removed from Australia and for any reason needs to be returned to Australia before entering their destination country, the person will be legally able to re-enter without a visa. I understand there have been some unusual cases where this has been an issue in the past, so this change makes sure that these rare circumstances can be dealt with quickly and effectively. It is noted that the person who is returned in this circumstance will be considered to have never left the migration zone and the same visa application bars will continue to apply. This amendment to the aborted removal law effectively clarifies the status of non-citizens in the situation described and tightens loopholes and oversights of the original act.

The character related amendments outlined in schedule 2 of the bill assist in strengthening the framework established in December by the Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Act 2014. The amendments made last year sought to enhance the character and general visa provisions to ensure any non-citizens that participate in criminal activity or pose a security risk to the Australian community are liable for visa refusal or cancellation. Last year, we also introduced mandatory cancellation of visas for non-citizens in prison who pose a risk until they had been assessed and their immigration status has been determined. The amendments in this bill greatly complement those made last year, ensuring confidential criminal intelligence—that is, of a critical nature to the decision making process—can be
protected. This also sees the alignment of the term 'character concern' with the 'character test' so that the government and associated agencies are able to identify and assess non-citizens who pose a threat to our security.

I move now to the amendments made in schedule 3 of the Migration and Maritime Powers Amendment (No. 1) Bill 2015. The amendment clarifies that a person who has been refused a protection visa application made on their behalf will no longer be able to make further protection visa applications, regardless of changing grounds or criteria. This is a very important amendment as it prevents a non-citizen from forestalling their departure from Australia. It effectively stops non-citizens using applications as a delaying tactic in an attempt to stay in the country. I am certain the amendment will ensure the law fits the government's original intention behind this section of the act. I know that in my electorate, and I am sure in most of our electorates, there have been many instances where non-citizens have used multiple applications as a delaying tactic in attempting to stay in this country.

Continuing with schedule 3 amendments, I consider the clarification made in regard to fast-track applicants to be a fair and just improvement to the laws under review. For the purpose of this amendment, I note these fast-track applicants are those unauthorised maritime arrivals in Australia who arrived on or after 13 August 2012 and before 1 January 2014 and any other person or persons specified by the minister and conforming to the legislation. The amendments being made allow fast-track applicants who have been refused a protection visa on either character or security grounds the opportunity to apply for review of the decision. All reviews will be handled by the Immigration Assessment Authority, which is a subsection of the Migration and Refugee Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This amendment plays a critical role in demonstrating that the government is committed to dealing with noncitizens posing a risk to the community in a fair, comprehensive and efficient manner.

These amendments also clarify the understanding of ceasing visas. All visas held, regardless of whether or not they are in effect, will be ceased if a ceasing event occurs—a ceasing event being a cancellation or refusal of a visa. Prior to this amendment, there was some grey area in the case of a visa cessation, allowing argument for a dormant visa to be exempt from cessation. The clarification ensures all visa ceasing provisions will be interpreted consistently and in line with the government's intentions for this policy. Regardless of the status of the visa, dormant or otherwise, it will be subject to the provisions outlined in the act. The schedule 4 amendments are associated with the Maritime Powers Act. The amendment confirms that powers under the act are allowed to be invoked 'in the course of passage through or above the waters of another country' in a manner that conforms to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Schedule 4 details three criteria to which the situation must conform in order to exercise the maritime powers outlined. This amendment highlights the government's intention to ensure all action taken under the Maritime Powers Act is consistent and in line with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It is an amendment which illustrates the government's priority of maintaining maritime security whilst conforming to international law as a global citizen.

To make some general points, the amendments outlined are an important step towards eliminating the loopholes in the migration and maritime laws. The amendments are fair and provide all parties involved with the opportunity for review with the AAT, whilst keeping Australia's security interests at the top of this government's priority list. Perhaps the most
important amendment in this bill is the improvements made to the mandatory cancellation provisions under the Migration Act. It provides the government with the ability to ensure noncitizens of character and/or integrity concern are available for removal, given they are unsuccessful in having their visa reinstated due to the risk they pose. I see this to be a crucial amendment to the bill, providing the government and associated agencies with the means to act on information that proves a noncitizen to be of character concern to Australia's security and the safety of all Australians.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the minister and the department for their efforts in improving the bill and commend their development of the amendments discussed. I am certain the amendments will strengthen and clarify the legal framework in the original acts and provide consistent interpretation of the original policy. It is another positive step towards ensuring Australia's national security is maintained. I endorse and support the amendments made to the legislation as an important step in ensuring the law operates in accordance with the government's policy intention.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (19:55): It is good to have the opportunity to speak on the Migration Amendment (Charging for a Migration Outcome) Bill. The bill goes to a lot of matters, and it particularly goes to the integrity of both our immigration system and our national security. Everyone understands that we must set the rules that determine who is allowed into this country. We must know who arrives, and there cannot be any form of compromise. This is the consistent message that the Australian people have had from us and that they continue to get from us under the leadership of Prime Minister Turnbull. I know that some people hoped that the Prime Minister was going to change the working policies of this government, but that was never going to happen. The vast majority of the people support exactly what we are doing. The Australian people know that the Australian borders and the integrity of our immigration system are absolutely safe with us. Obviously it is true that not everyone agrees with our policy. Certainly the Greens, by way of example, do not agree with the policy that we have in place. There are others like GetUp! and their supporters that also do not agree with us. However, the 'open the borders and let everyone come by boat' crowd is extremely small in this country. They are of course deluded that they are in the majority, probably also thinking that a Q&A audience is broadly representative of Australia's mainstream population. Obviously that is not true.

Our policy has delivered integrity for the immigration system, and it is comprised of many aspects. Turnbacks, off-shore processing and the arrangements under which no-one who arrived by boat since our government commenced has been allowed to stay are key elements of our working policy. We have set the rules and through our rock solid consistency those that think about coming by boat understand the way this government operates. Because almost no-one tries anymore, our humanitarian intake is now just from offshore. That also has resulted in the humanitarian dividend of being able to accept 12,000 of those in the worst circumstances from Syria, the persecuted minorities including Christians. We should be in no doubt about this fact. When we look at our televisions and we see the tragedy of Syria and the persecution of defenceless people by a brutal, inhuman and evil organisation, it is then that we need the flexibility to act like we have—but that is not possible if we do not have control over our immigration system.
I know that in the future there will be suggestions that our opponents can maintain that integrity and that the boats will not come again, but that is as untrue now as it was in 2007. Nothing is more certain than the fact that any thought of a return to government by our opponents will see the return of the boats with them. As the sign on the door of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition says, 'Welcome to Australia for those who've come across the seas.' No-one doubts that the deputy opposition leader and so many others on the other side have a clearly different view from us and the return of the boats will follow any future return of the Labor Party to government.

This bill is about ensuring each aspect of our policy works. It is about ensuring that if things do not work out the way they should when we remove unlawful noncitizens that there are no gaps in the process or arrangements that could result in that unlawful noncitizen being able to stay after having taken advantage of the circumstances. To that end, this bill makes a number of unrelated amendments to the Migration Act 1958 and the Maritime Powers Act 2013. Overall, it helps to advance the intent of previous legislation to strengthen our borders and to maintain the integrity of the migration program.

The amendments to this bill certainly make sense. When unlawful noncitizens are in the process of being removed from Australia and something goes wrong, such as a country of transit refuses entry, we need to have the ability to bring the unlawful citizen back without a visa. Also, of course, such an eventuality should not be taken as a reset of the situation that the person was in before the removal began. It is, therefore, an amendment where such a person will be considered before the law to have never left the migration zone and the same prohibitions will continue to apply for visa applications. This will ensure that, just because they are back, it will not mean that they can apply to stay, so that there is no change to what it was like before the removal process was initiated.

The next matter I would like to raise relates to character, to the cancellation of general visas, and to the legal framework surrounding those provisions being strengthened via the amendments in this bill. This is particularly relevant with the recent events on Christmas Island. Given the success the government has had in reducing illegal maritime arrivals, the balance of those on Christmas Island has shifted to those being deported on character grounds. The violence perpetrated by some of the 200-plus persons detained there, led by those who have violent criminal backgrounds, just bears out the importance of having the ability to remove those whose actions and records demonstrate poor character. These people do pose a risk to the Australian community and should be liable for a visa refusal or cancellation. I very much endorse the introduction of the mandatory cancellation of visas for noncitizens in prisons who do not pass the character test so that those who pose a risk to the safety of the Australian community can be detained until the risk they pose has actually been assessed and their immigration status has been determined.

Certainly it is the case that the core issues addressed by these amendments will also ensure that confidential criminal intelligence that is at the heart of the decision and is the justification for invoking certain character provisions can be safeguarded. There will also be a new power regarding removal to ensure that a noncitizen whose visa has been mandatorily cancelled will be able to be removed from Australia at the end of the process. Also, consistent with the point I made before, the amendments will actually align the definition of 'character concern' with the character test. This will make sure that those with a criminal history can be properly
identified by officers and the criminal background of those who come to note because of concerns about their character will be identified.

The amendments contained in this bill also withdraw the opportunity to make an additional protection visa application if they have already had an application made on their behalf and it has been refused. So this will eliminate an applicant trying to circumvent the original failure by using different grounds for the subsequent attempt for the protection visa. What this is ultimately about is preventing attempts to stop the detainee's removal by making further applications. I know this will irritate some people, but the reality is that the vast majority of the Australian people want the integrity in the immigration system that this government has achieved and they want it to be absolutely maintained.

It is not my intention to go through the amendments and quote sections and subsections. It is true that much of this bill is somewhat technical in nature but it is important that the legal framework of the Migration Act is strengthened. With that strengthening comes the maintenance of the integrity of the immigration system and the fundamental basis of our approach—that is, that our system must be fair and people must abide by that system. That said, people should not be able to play the system, they should not be able to work the system and, above all, they should not be able to take advantage of the Australian people and the generous nature of our support.

The approach of this government is to be fair and generous, but that should apply to legitimate people with the most need. As I have said before in many other debates, although this bill is not strictly about illegal maritime arrivals, the humanitarian intake should be absolutely targeted toward those in the greatest need. The priority of those to be taken must be based upon need and not upon cash. Therefore the ability to buy an airline ticket to Indonesia and then to pay the people smugglers to try to get to Australia is not the example that we should be supporting.

It is through this bill and the other related bills that we are making sure that the immigration system has the integrity it needs and through that integrity we can ensure our humanitarian intake remains a priority for those in the greatest need. There is no doubt that the humanitarian intake must focus on those in refugee camps and those being sheltered in the most difficult of circumstances. The priority must be the persecuted minorities from Syria and the Karen or Chin people from Burma or even the persecuted Vietnamese activists who have devoted their lives to freedom of speech, freedom of religion and other freedoms that can see them face jail and persecution. We must take people from refugee camps and from places of shelter around conflict zones. This is the compassionate approach and this is the dividend that comes from stopping those who have come by boat, who have bypassed numerous countries thereby undermining their legitimacy and lowering the priority that we attach to their cases. That is the aim of our policy: need over cash. It is through this bill and previous bills and the actions of this government and the ADF that the right policy sees those in the most need receive the priority of our attention and receive the benefit of the support of this nation.

I endorse this bill and the policy of the Turnbull Government and I commend the Migration and Maritime Powers Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2015 to the House.

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (20:06): Like my colleague, the member for Cowan, observed, the compassionate approach of this government is something to be recognised. I want to reflect on the words of the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection yesterday
in the House when he talked about this recent visit to Jordan and Lebanon. He had the opportunity to meet with many people in a camp where there were some 80,000 people, including 40,000 children. He said it was a real eye-opening and sobering experience. He mentioned that he talked to the UN officials there, obviously, about the need for increased humanitarian assistance and also the fact that the situation in Syria is deteriorating and will continue to deteriorate as they enter the colder winter months in the northern hemisphere.

We know that this government has come up with a sensible response that the Australian people have acknowledged is appropriate in these challenging times, and that consists of not just a dollar figure of some $44 million but also assistance to more than 200,000 refugees. They are also providing, importantly, 12,000 places to the Syrian and Iraqi refugee program. Already this November we have had more than 2,200 people being assisted with initial assessments, and they will be arriving in Australia later this year. It was great to hear the minister had already provided families with their immigration cards and travel documents and hopefully those people in particular will be arriving before Christmas. In effect this has resulted in an increase, on a per capita basis, to the highest number of settlements under the refugee and humanitarian program compared to any other country in the world—quite a significant outcome. The number of humanitarian and refugee places will increase from 13,750 to 25,750 with an additional 12,000 places. This is something that we should all be very proud of and, as I said, it is a compassionate response.

This leads me on to talk briefly about the migration and maritime powers amendment bill. My colleagues have covered the technical details of this bill in some detail, so I will just stick to the key points. This bill contains a number of amendments to the Migration Act and a separate amendment to the Maritime Powers Act. These amendments will strengthen and clarify the legal frameworks in those acts, ensuring they will be interpreted consistently with a regional policy intention and operate effectively as intended. Specifically, the bill will ensure that when an unlawful noncitizen is in the process of being removed to another country and before they enter the other country the person is returned to Australia, then that person has a lawful basis to return to Australia without a visa. The bill will ensure that when such a person does return to Australia without a visa, the visa application bars in sections of the Migration Act will continue to apply as if that person never left Australia. The bill will make a technical amendment to ensure that the prohibition against the making of further protection visa applications in section 48A of the Migration Act operates as intended under policy. Importantly, the bill will ensure that the Administrative Appeals Tribunal can review certain character or security based decisions to refuse to grant a protection visa to fast-track an applicant.

Consistent with the rest of this bill, these items demonstrate this government's clear and continuing commitment to ensuring that noncitizens who pose a risk to the Australian community are dealt with effectively, efficiently and comprehensively. It complements our successful policy of securing our borders. We have seen in Europe over recent months the tragic circumstances facing that continent and the need for a better resolution than what currently exists. Importantly, on our own borders there have been fewer deaths at sea. The Australian public recognises that we have acted appropriately and in the best interests of mankind and of those people coming to Australia. With that, I commend the bill to the House.
Mr WYATT (Hasluck—Assistant Minister for Health) (20:11): I thank members for their contributions to this debate. The Migration and Maritime Powers Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2015 is an omnibus bill that makes a number of unrelated and technical amendments to the Migration Act and the Maritime Powers Act. Together these amendments are important to clarify and strengthen the legislative framework around persons who seek to enter and remain in Australia. The bill will amend the Migration Act to ensure that when the department attempts to remove someone from Australia up until that point the person successfully enters the destination country, the person can be returned to Australia without a visa and, if they are so returned, then certain application bars that would otherwise no longer apply because the person left Australia will continue to apply.

The amendments in this bill will also ensure that when the Migration Act provides for a visa to cease, that visa will cease whether or not the visa is in effect at the time. The bill strengthens and clarifies the legal framework established in December 2014 by the Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Bill 2014 and ensures that the character cancellation provisions operate effectively as intended. It does this by ensuring that confidential criminal intelligence that is critical to decision-making under certain character provisions can be appropriately protected, inserting a new removal power to put beyond doubt that a noncitizen whose visa has been mandatorily cancelled will be available for removal from Australia at the end of the process, and aligning the definition character concern with the character test to ensure that the department is able to identify noncitizens who have a criminal history or who are of character concern.

The bill will also amend the Migration Act to ensure that fast-track applicants refused protection visas on certain character or security grounds can make an application for review of that decision to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal under the existing provisions within the Migration Act. Character determinations can be evidentially and legally complex, and the AAT has particular expertise in this area. By allowing the AAT to review those decisions, the government is ensuring a consistent and rigorous but fair and expert process. The bill will also clarify that when a protection visa application is made on a person’s behalf and that person is then refused the visa, the person cannot apply for a further protection visa regardless of whether the application is made on the same or different grounds to the original application.

Finally, the bill amends the Maritime Powers Act 2013 to confirm the powers under the act are able to be exercised in the course of the passage through or above waters of another country in a manner consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Overall, the bill significantly improves the Migration Act and the Maritime Powers Act by removing inconsistencies and ensuring that the law operates in accordance with the government’s policy intention. I commend the bill to the chamber.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr WYATT (Hasluck—Assistant Minister for Health) (20:15): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.
Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (20:15): I rise to speak on the Health Insurance Amendment (Safety Net) Bill 2015. This bill gives effect to the 2014-15 budget measure, Simplifying Medicare safety net arrangements, and, as was the theme with that budget and, frankly, this government's general approach to the health portfolio at that time, it represents a cut to the safety nets of just under $270 million.

From the outset, I want to make it clear that Labor does not say that the current Medicare Safety Net arrangements are perfect nor that they are not in need of reform. The three safety nets, in essence, are confusing for many people and they are overly complex. The principle behind the safety net, Extended Medicare Safety Net and the Greatest Permissible Gap, is simple. It recognises that, in any one particular year, normally because of a serious health event, patients incur significant out-of-pocket expenses that are not otherwise covered by Medicare, or, to quote from the legislation when it was first introduced to parliament, the safety net is 'to protect all Australians from higher out-of-pocket costs for medical services provided outside hospitals.'

The safety nets exist, principally, to ensure that patients who experience a serious health event and who would otherwise struggle to meet the costs are able to do so; and, in general, they do that. But we also know that, for a whole raft of reasons—lack of access to services, geographic location, inability to pay what are often very high up-front costs and lack of competition in particular areas—there are many vulnerable groups in our community that never ever reach the safety nets.

Labor understand the need to reform the safety nets, and we are up for having a broader discussion with the government about how they might better be targeted to ensuring that disadvantaged Australians, in particular, are getting better access to the care that they need. In government, we did substantially try to retarget the safety nets. The changes made in 2009 to the Health Insurance Amendment (Extended Medicare Safety Net) Bill 2009 by my former colleague, the then member for Gellibrand and Minister for Health Nicola Roxon, introduced caps for specific items on the Medicare Benefits Schedule once patients had reached the Extended Medicare Safety Net.

In developing the policy case for these changes, the then minister, Nicola Roxon, was supported by two independent reports, including one by the Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation at the University of Technology in Sydney. The report concluded that, for every Extended Medicare Safety Net benefit dollar that was paid to a patient, 78c went towards meeting the doctor's higher fees rather than reducing patients out-of-pocket costs. The report also noted the extent to which safety net benefits were being paid for obstetric and assisted reproductive therapy services, principally because of an increase in the fees charged for these services rather than better access for services or more people from disadvantaged communities being able to access them.

The changes that were made to the Medicare safety nets in 2009 allowed the Minister for Health to determine the maximum benefit that is payable under the safety net by imposing a
cap by way of a legislative instrument. The items that were capped as part of what was then announced in Labor's 2009-10 budget included obstetrics, assisted reproductive technology services, hair transplants, injection of a therapeutic substance into an eye, one type of varicose vein treatment and one type of cataract surgery. At the time, the rebates were increased for some MBS items to assist patients with their out-of-pocket costs. The government has said that these reforms did result in a drop in fees charged for these particular items. But the issue that appears to have emerged now is that, in some areas, there has been a further shift and the Extended Medicare Safety Net is driving higher up-front costs for some MBS items not capped.

In better understanding the context through which changes to this bill are being made, it is also worth reflecting on the Senate Community Affairs References Committee inquiry into out-of-pocket costs in health care. This inquiry was conducted over six months in 2014 and considered the existing safety net arrangements specifically. One of the consistent themes that was raised during this inquiry, and it is reflected in the committee's final report, is that existing safety nets do not benefit or assist people who are most in need of support from a safety net. I note that at the Senate Supplementary Budget Estimates hearings in October this year, the deputy secretary with responsibility for these issues provided evidence that, unlike the PBS safety nets, the MBS safety nets tended to be more regressive and engaged by people in middle and higher income brackets.

In its report into out-of-pocket costs in health care handed down in August last year, the community affairs references committee concluded that it was:

… concerned that existing safety nets do not benefit or assist people who are most in need of support from a safety net. Often individuals will incur significant out-of-pocket costs before they reach the respective threshold amount. As outlined throughout the inquiry, out-of-pocket costs can be barriers to accessing health care.

The committee went on to recommend that:
The government review the impact and effectiveness of existing safety nets to ensure that current safeguards provide adequate protection to the most vulnerable in our community.

Unfortunately, that is not quite what the government has done in this bill. I do acknowledge that the committee concluded that existing safety net arrangements are complex, and that many people find it difficult to understand the requirements and thresholds that must be met to qualify, in turn recommending a single integrated safety net.

In this context, I want to go back to my original point: that Labor is not opposed to changes to the safety net but, as the committee noted, there must be careful consideration as to what services and costs are eligible to contribute to the safety net. This simply is not what has been done in this bill.

I want to acknowledge particularly that the minister has been generous in briefing me on the bill and providing further information from her department, and I thank her adviser who is here with us this evening. Some of it, unfortunately, has not come in a form that allows proper comparisons between patients who live in particular areas, and specific item numbers that contribute towards the extended Medicare safety net would have been helpful. The timeliness obviously has been a bit of an issue as well, but I certainly acknowledge the work provided, and we have studied it carefully.
Labor appreciates that there is some history in these changes and also that a policy case does exist for changes to the Medicare safety nets to ensure that patients who most need access to them do have access. In this context, I acknowledge that this bill does reduce the safety net thresholds so more people, the government has claimed—these will on the whole be concessional patients—will reach the new safety net. That is in itself a good thing. However, it is unclear to me how lowering the thresholds means that one patient group, concessional patients, will have more chance of meeting the safety net than general patients, if that is not actually what happens now. At Senate estimates the deputy secretary responsible within the Department of Health for these changes provided evidence that, at present, the balance of safety net utilisation is mainly towards general patients rather than concessional patients and that the MBS safety net is overwhelmingly non-pensioner, non-concessional clients.

So again I agree that there is a case for making changes to the safety net, particularly changes that encourage the uptake or allow the uptake by more concessional patients, but the government unfortunately has not made the case as to how what it is doing specifically targets concession card holders, other than the lowering of the threshold and the assumption that therefore concession card holders will automatically be the ones that are still able to find the up-front costs to meet those safety net thresholds in the first place. It has not made the case that what it is doing specifically targets concession card holders.

The sting in the tail, of course, in this legislation is that it also makes changes that reduce the out-of-pocket costs that can contribute to reaching the safety net, and the benefits payable once the safety nets are reached are also reduced. That is where the government is realising the savings in this bill. Under the existing safety net arrangements, the original safety net threshold is set at $440.80 for all Medicare card holders, and the extended Medicare safety net threshold for concessional patients and FTB part A recipients is set at $638.40 and for general patients at $2,000. Once the extended Medicare safety net threshold has been reached, 80 per cent of patients' out-of-pocket costs are covered by the government or the extended Medicare safety net benefit cap for out-of-hospital services—as I mentioned previously, as part of the changes made by the then Minister for Health and Ageing in 2009. Under the changes in this bill, the existing Medicare safety nets and greatest permissible gap are replaced with a simplified Medicare safety net. Under the proposed arrangements, the thresholds will be $400 for families and singles that are concession card holders; $700 for families eligible for family tax benefit A and non-concessional singles; and $1,000 for non-concessional families.

Other changes in the bill limit the accumulation to the safety net threshold. Under current safety net arrangements, all out-of-pocket costs for out-of-hospital Medicare services count towards the threshold. Under the proposed changes in this bill, a formula is to be applied that will reduce the amount of out-of-pocket expenses that can contribute to that accumulation. Instead of all out-of-hospital Medicare services contributing to the threshold, this is to be calculated based on 150 per cent of the MBS schedule fee minus the Medicare rebate. Labor is concerned that the government has not thought through the unintended consequences of applying such a blanket cut.

That brings me also to the benefits payable once the safety net threshold has been reached. Under the current arrangements, once patients have reached the original Medicare safety net, out-of-pocket costs are covered at 100 per cent of the MBS schedule fee. Once patients reach
the extended Medicare safety net, 80 per cent of their out-of-pocket costs are covered—or the extended Medicare safety net benefit cap for out-of-hospital services, if it is for a service to which a cap applies. Under the new arrangements, a cap is set for the maximum safety net benefits amount.

In the second reading speech, the minister said:

This amendment will ensure that a strong safety net continues to protect all Australians from high out-of-pocket costs for medical services provided out of hospital.

Unfortunately, it will not. Labor has had countless representations from psychiatrists, providers of fertility services, providers of radiation oncology and a number of other doctors groups, providing details of precisely what these changes will mean for the patients that they care for. I will go into the detail of some of those impacts shortly. I also have a petition, which unfortunately I do not have here with me in the chamber. I will seek to get it in here so I can also provide that for the House if I have leave to table it.

Labor, as I said, has had countless representations from psychiatrists, providers of fertility services, providers of radiation oncology and a number of other doctors groups, providing details of precisely what these changes mean for their patients. It is worth pointing out that, having announced the change back in the 2014 budget—this is not this year's budget measure; it is the previous one, which was handed down on 13 May 2014—and having heard about the adverse impacts of these changes, the government really has not made the case, nor has it done anything to say, 'These are the changes we think we need to make to deal with some of these issues.' It basically has, in essence, introduced the bill exactly as it was on the day the budget was handed down in 2014. There has been a lot of traffic on this. There has been a lot of concern expressed about it, and a lot of issues have been raised. There has been ample opportunity to try to deal with perhaps some of those issues or to have a bit of a rethink about this bill, but that is not what has happened.

As I said at the outset, Labor does not claim that the safety nets are perfect. Labor do not say that, without question, they are utilised as intended by providers, nor do we say that every person who should have access to them does. With this proposal having been on the table since May 2014, I am surprised that more work has not been done in this area of reform. The government having initially developed this policy more than a year and a half ago, not a single change has been considered to address the adverse consequences contained within the bill as it has been presented. On top of that, in the meantime the government has frozen indexation of the MBS rebate and seems to have entirely ignored the nexus between these two savings measures.

We have some serious concerns about the thousands of people who will be adversely impacted by these changes. I intend to explore some of that in detail during this debate. If the government is serious that more people who should have access to safety nets will have as a result of these changes, and if it really thinks that patients will not be adversely impacted by these $270 million of cuts, you would think that the data to support this, and any other information, would be provided not just to the opposition but in the public domain, to make the case for this bill well before we are here in this chamber having the debate.

The opposition to this bill has been consistent across the health sector. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners has warned that patients will be left out of pocket under the proposed changes. The college of GPs has rightly pointed to the additional impact
that the ongoing indexation freeze of the Medicare benefits schedule will have when the combined impact of these changes is taken into account. On this point specifically, the college president, Professor Frank Jones, has said:

... coupled with the indexation freeze, the legislation will actually increase the cost of care to vulnerable groups. Safety net thresholds will increase by CPI annually while rebates are frozen.

In making this point, the college of GPs has provided an example, using an MBS item, No. 23—the item number for a standard GP consultation. To quote the college's example directly:

A patient who has reached the Medicare Safety Net threshold and faces a $75 fee for an item 23 will pay $19.45 in out-of-pocket expenses, compared to $7.60 under the current safety net arrangement.

By 2018, when the MBS indexation freeze has been in place for three years, patients will face $24.03 in out-of-pocket costs, compared to $8.51 under the current safety net for the same standard GP consultation with a $75 fee.

This in itself calls into question the accuracy of some of the government's costings on the bill, for this measure was originally announced, as I have said, in the context of the 2014-15 budget. Since then the government has cut more than $2 billion from Medicare through its ongoing Medicare benefits schedule indexation freeze, and no consideration has been factored into the costings in this bill in terms of changes to doctors' billing practices. For the government to think that doctors would not change their billing practices because of these cuts is just simply not the evidence that is being provided to me.

The Australian Medical Association has said that the sickest and most disadvantaged Australians will be hit hardest by these changes. We know from OECD's Health at a Glance 2015 data, published last week, that Australia ranks very poorly when it comes to the share of out-of-pocket medical expenditure as a percentage of household consumption. In the context of this bill, the president of the AMA, Professor Brian Owler has said:

The new Medicare Safety Net arrangements, together with the ongoing freeze of Medicare patient rebates, mean that growing out-of-pocket costs will become a reality for all Australian families, including the most vulnerable patients in our community.

Professor Owler goes on to say:

With higher out of pocket costs, patients will delay seeking treatment, or not seek treatment at all.

Concluding that:

The new arrangements will be a burden for Australian families. They must be voted down.

I want to talk about the impact on psychiatry patients in particular. A significant number of psychiatrists have raised serious concerns about the impact these changes will have on their patients. To quote the vice president of the National Association of Practising Psychiatrists, Dr Shirley Prager and a number of her colleagues who co-signed correspondence to me:

I am very concerned about the impact the new Safety Net proposals will have on patients who need long-term ongoing mental health treatment as these patients will find their health care with a psychiatrist increasingly unaffordable. If the new Safety Net is legislated a significant group of high need patients who require consultation with their psychiatrist more than once a week will lose the appropriate level of support provided by the current Safety Net arrangements. Many of these patients are poor and unable to work as a consequence of illness, and the intensive psychiatric help that they urgently need to re-build their lives will be lost under the new Safety Net.

I believe that patients who need to access a psychiatrist in these circumstances will suffer significant and increased financial hardship, or may, very frequently, be forced to give up much needed treatment
to the overall detriment of their own personal health and well-being. The consequences are potentially
disastrous.

The outcome of these changes will severely compromise access to appropriate treatment for a
particularly vulnerable group of patients with serious mental illnesses, including sexual abuse victims
who are currently the subject of a Royal Commission. These changes, if put into place—
And this is a big claim—
will lead to an increase in the incidence of suicide among this patient group.

And the concerns about psychotherapy patients in particular are ones that are shared by the
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.

The college, I do acknowledge, is generally supportive of the rationale for the changes to
the safety net. And on this I will reiterate Labor's position that we are not opposed to the
safety net being better targeted. But the college president, Professor Malcolm Hopwood, says,
'We remain seriously concerned that the implementation of the above changes will not enable
the continued treatment of a vulnerable group of people accessing intensive psychotherapy
services.' Professor Hopwood, writing on behalf of the College of Psychiatrists has said of
these changes, 'Psychotherapy is an important evidence-based psychiatric service delivered by
psychiatrists through intensive sessions of one-on-one therapy. Some patients who present
with a range of complex mental health conditions, including young people who have
experienced great trauma, such as sexual or physical abuse, are most appropriately supported
through frequent—multiple times per week—psychotherapy sessions with a psychiatrist over
a longer-term period, often 12 months or more. This means they can quickly pass the 50
sessions per year limit imposed in the new safety net and hence exceed their access to the
most-subsidised care.

In the proposed bill the rebate is cut significantly after 50 sessions. According to our
modelling the out-of-pocket cost to the patient of single sessions of therapy is likely to
double. People who currently receive subsidised therapy will find that from the beginning of
2016 it will cost thousands of dollars. In our opinion this is not conducive to making mental
health care accessible, or prioritising those most needy.' So we are talking about some of the
most vulnerable, needy patients imaginable.

On this point specifically, I do wish to refer to a petition, which I will seek leave to table in
the form of a document, signed by some 1,464 people opposing these changes and started by
Dr Angela Livingstone. This petition, named 'Don't leave the most vulnerable behind' calls on
the government not to leave these people behind. And I will briefly quote directly from it:
I fear this will have a terrible effect on a significant number of patients who need long-term ongoing
mental health treatment. Currently (in line with fees outlined in the Medicare Benefits Schedule), this
group of patients who see a psychiatrist more than 50 times per year have their rebate reduced by half
but this is largely covered by the Safety Net. However, the new measures in the Single Safety Net will
result in a massively increased gap of $120 or more for every session after 50 sessions for these people.
This is unaffordable for most people, let alone those socioeconomically disadvantaged by their
condition.
These high need patients require therapy with their psychiatrist more than once a week, and they will
lose the support provided by the current Safety Net arrangements. Many of these patients are poor and
unable to work as a consequence of illness, and the intensive psychiatric help that they urgently need to
re-build their lives will be lost under the new Safety Net.
They will suffer significant and increased financial hardship, or may be forced to give up much needed treatment with potentially disastrous consequences.

Again, she refers in the petition particularly to patients who have been the survivors of sexual abuse.

Labor certainly understands the concerns expressed by this petition. We have not sought any of this out. We have not gone out to groups and said, 'Hey, come to us and tell us why this bill's terrible.' These have all come to our offices spontaneously from these groups immediately seeking for Labor not to support the bill. This is not something we have gone out deliberately to do. We have actually taken a long time to have a considered view of what we might do on this bill, and this has been groups coming to us. So Labor certainly understands those concerns. Whilst continuing my speech, I wish to seek leave to table this document, representing the voices of some 1,464 people who are expressing their concerns about this particular measure.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): Is leave granted?

Mr Briggs: Mr Deputy Speaker, I understood there was a procedure with petitions that they go through the Petitions—

Ms KING: I am tabling it as a document, not as a petition. It is a matter for you if you do not want to entertain it.

Mr Briggs: I am not trying to be difficult. It is just that normally you would go through the Petitions—

Ms KING: It would not be compliant. I am seeking to table it as a document.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leave is granted. I thank the honourable minister.

Ms KING: Yes. I understand I have put you in a difficult position, Minister, by not talking to you about it before. Unfortunately there was a changeover in the middle of that, so my apologies for that. So, for any of your whips or the Leader of the House, I understand that he has done the right thing. Thank you.

We are potentially talking about patients who have experienced some very substantial form of trauma, and for these patients it will mean either that their out-of-pocket costs increase unimaginably or that they forgo treatment altogether, potentially ending up in hospital or worse. It is clear from all the discussions I have had that the government has really not engaged with these impacts—certainly not enough to answer some of these questions. There are, of course, other groups. The Fertility Society of Australia IVF Directors Group has written to the Leader of the Opposition warning:

The proposed changes will affect patients who are chronically ill requiring regular medical attendances and those patients who need access to higher cost medical interventions. The changes will particularly impact cancer patients, fertility patients, patients requiring higher cost imaging services and those needing regular access to psychiatric services.

The government's budgets have estimated these cuts to patient benefits at $266.7 million however our initial work indicates the actual budget saving may be double this. The proposed changes would represent a sharp and strongly regressive barrier for less well off patients to access necessary medical services.

The government obviously contests this point, but again it has not engaged in this particular debate. With IVF patients already currently facing out-of-pocket costs of $4,000 a cycle, the
Fertility Society of Australia says these could rise to $10,000 to $15,000 per cycle, which, when you consider it can take many cycles, will be simply unaffordable for many. Despite the fact that there are some bulk-billing IVF clinics, they are certainly not very widespread at the current point.

The College of Radiation Oncologists have written:
The proposed changes to the Safety Net will mean that those patients paying for private radiation therapy services may face significant out of pocket costs. This represents an unacceptable barrier to accessing cancer treatment.

Now the government has suggested that in some of these areas there have been substantial increases in fees, some of them well out of proportion to the actual costs of delivering services, and that billing practices have been driven by the extended Medicare safety net. I do not disagree with the government here. That has particularly been the case where there has been very limited private sector competition and where there has been very strong corporatisation of what often started out as very small private services. The problem with the bluntness of the measures contained in the bill is that it is not clear that these services will in fact, given their profit drivers, substantially change their billing practices, and if they do not it is patients who will foot the bill.

We faced a very similar circumstance when we changed the MBS and the number of visits provided under the Better Access program. We went about that change. We conducted an evaluation, and the results of that evaluation showed that billing practices meant the skew of benefits was going largely to wealthier postcodes, and that was of concern. So what we did in making the change—and it was not an easy change to make—is that we utilised the savings that we realised through that measure to redirect the money. It was that money that funded the ATAPS program, the expansion of headspace, and EPIC, largely targeted specifically to disadvantaged communities. So we used the opportunity of making those changes where we were concerned about exactly the same issues the government is, about higher billing behaviour and lack of good, targeted access. We utilised that money and redirected it so we were getting services to where they were most needed. As I said at the start, often what we are seeing is that people are not getting access to services and they are not, therefore, reaching the safety net.

The government might have been able to make a case for better targeting of this funding to services for disadvantaged communities, particularly, for example, trying to get better access to psychiatry in rural communities, but that is not what it is doing with this bill. The savings in this bill are going back into the Medical Research Future Fund, not back into direct service provision. If we are serious about better targeting safety nets to those who have the least advantage then perhaps improving access to services where there is very little access could have been considered in the context of this bill.

That being said, Labor will not be supporting the bill. These are cuts to the safety net that, as I have said, were developed in the context of the 2014 budget. That budget, as has now become very clear, was not a reform budget or a budget focused on improvements to the health system. It was a budget focused on some very blunt instruments to find savings: the GP tax now implemented through the ongoing freeze of MBS indexation; the cuts of more than $60 billion from public hospitals; the cuts hundreds of millions of dollars from preventive
health programs, public dental and ongoing plans to increase the cost of medicines for every Australian—and the list went on.

This measure, unfortunately, continues to bear all the hallmarks of the 2014 budget. While Labor remains happy to talk to the government about safety net reform, and in particular how they can be better targeted, we are of the view that the consequences—perhaps unintended—of this bill mean that we simply cannot support it. Therefore I move:

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

"the House declines to give the bill a second reading because the bill will have significant and adverse consequences for hundreds of thousands of patients, especially those who need frequent sessions with psychiatrists, those accessing Assisted Reproductive Technology services, those receiving radiation oncology and notes that this is yet another component of the Government's ongoing attack on Medicare as part of a plan to privatise Australia's healthcare system".

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

Mr Husic: I second the amendment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr PASIN (Barker) (20:46): I rise this evening to speak on the Health Insurance Amendment (Safety Net) Bill 2015. The bill introduces a new Medicare safety net to replace three legislative mechanisms: the Extended Medicare Safety Net, the original Medicare safety net and the Greatest Permissible Gap.

Our Medicare system is exceptional; it is world leading. It delivers to our citizens a guarantee of universal health care. It is a guarantee that, sadly, the majority of people who occupy this earth do not enjoy. Whilst our government is fully committed to maintaining this as a permanent feature in Australian public policy, to do so we must continue to revisit it, reform it and enable it to serve us today and tomorrow and to serve the lives of our children and grandchildren.

Just like every piece of government policy, there is a cost to the taxpayer. Nothing, as they say, is free. Budgetary forecasts see Medicare costs scheduled to grow to around $23 billion by the year ending 30 June 2017. Medicare, indeed, is the fourth most expensive program after payments to the states, support for seniors—mainly the age pension—and family tax benefits.

This significant cost needs to be seen within our overall health care spend, which is estimated to reach around $75 billion by the financial year 2016-17. These are serious financial commitments to our citizens. Yet it is absolutely essential that we maintain our comprehensive and effective health care system and its standards. The health care of our citizens is clearly a priority of this government. Whilst we are committed to a comprehensive health care system, we remain equally committed to one that is sustainable into the future. This government has continually looked for inefficiencies in the system and has been diligent in rectifying them once identified.

The Health Insurance Amendment (Safety Net) Bill is part of that constant process of revision and reform that we have committed to. We have consistently taken steps to remove unnecessary duplication from all systems, in particular the healthcare system. The purpose of this bill is to consolidate the complex Medicare safety net arrangements and to introduce a new Medicare safety net that will continue to provide assistance to singles and families with
out-of-pocket costs for out-of-hospital Medicare services. In doing so, this government will achieve a saving to the taxpayer of $266.7 million over five years.

There is an unnecessary duplication across the current arrangements. Currently, the system assists families with their expenses for medical services through the extended Medicare safety net, the original Medicare safety net and the Greatest Permissible Gap. Across these three legislative schemes there are provisions to assist with out-of-pocket expenses. The services assisted include GP and specialist attendances and services provided in private clinics and private emergency departments. Of the three arrangements, the extended Medicare safety net accounts for the majority of the expenditure. This bill seeks to streamline these three overlapping schemes and, in doing so, make the system more efficient while retaining the overall aim of such a safety net: assisting families with out-of-pocket expenses and enabling better health care outcomes.

The status quo is complicated and confusing. Whilst the existing safety nets share the same intention they have often overlapping operation and concurrently have varying degrees of applicability. Consistent with this government's approach to legislation across the board we have taken a common-sense approach to this state of affairs, and we are taking steps in this bill to clear up the confusion surrounding safety nets in the health care space.

The current arrangements are also inconsistent. There is a limit on safety net benefits that will be paid for some, but not all, out-of-pocket hospital services. Some of these limits are fixed dollar amounts while others are based on a percentage of the Medicare fee. This inconsistency in arrangements can be confusing for patients and medical practitioners. The Medicare system should be set up to assist our citizens—not to stand in their way.

Previously in this chamber I have spoken on the Health Legislation Amendment (eHealth) Bill 2015 which this government enacted earlier this year. That bill focuses on bringing the way we administer our health care system into the 21st century and deliver efficiencies in patient management. In the same fashion, through streamlining the existing safety nets into one comprehensive arrangement this government is delivering a better Medicare system which is geared to achieving a better service for our citizenry.

The current arrangements simply do not meet those goals. Whilst the vast majority of doctors charge reasonable fees for their services, some doctors and service providers have, disappointingly, used the extended Medicare safety net to underwrite excessive fees. This has increased patients' out-of-pocket costs in some areas. Evidence of this behaviour was found in two independent reviews of the extended Medicare safety net in 2009 and 2011 which were undertaken by the Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation from the University of Technology, Sydney. Both reviews found that the extended Medicare safety net program had the unintended consequence of increasing the fees charged by doctors and that the majority of the benefits available were being paid to people living in high-income areas rather than to people with significant medical conditions. The 2009 review found that for some services, for every dollar spent through the extended Medicare safety net, more than 78c was going to health providers in the form of increased fees, whilst only 22c, or 22 per cent, was assisting patients with their costs. It is the view of this government that such a state of affairs is not the desired outcome. The taxpayer deserves more for the taxpayer dollar, and that is why this bill takes steps to simplify the system and address this anomaly.
Echoing the concerns of the Minister for Health, I agree that previous attempts to reform the system have added levels of complexity rather than dealing with the core issues. Changes have contributed to confusion, have added to the complexity of the overall Medicare program and have not addressed the issues sufficiently. At the moment, medical services are not uniformly capped, which means excessive fee inflation can still occur to services that are uncapped. For example, immediately after the capping of the safety net benefit for a cataract surgery service, the provider fee for an anaesthetic for cataract surgery increased greatly—in some cases by almost 400 per cent. Furthermore, some people reach their threshold almost immediately due to the unlimited amount of out-of-pocket costs that count towards the threshold. This makes the consumer relatively insensitive to the further fees charged, allowing for fee inflation. We must take steps to deliver better value for money in this space.

To protect Medicare for posterity, it is important to consider whether elements of the Medicare program are having their desired consequences. The time is right to replace the complex and inefficient Medicare safety net arrangements with a new Medicare safety net, one that is clearer and simpler. The new Medicare safety net will strengthen the system for patients into the future while contributing to a more sustainable Medicare system overall. Its design has been informed by the findings of two independent reviews; ongoing consultation with the medical profession since the introduction of the extended Medicare safety net in 2004; and concerns raised by patients.

The new Medicare safety net will continue to cover up to 80 per cent of out-of-pocket costs once an annual threshold is met. However, it will introduce a limit on the total amount of out-of-pocket costs for out-of-hospital Medicare services to be included in the costs that accumulate to towards that threshold. There are currently upper limits on the amount of safety net benefits which will be paid for some items. The new Medicare safety net legislation introduces uniform benefit caps across all items. Medical expenses for in-hospital Medicare services will continue not to be relevant for the purposes of the Medicare safety net.

This government has taken an informed position on this bill. It has delivered a more comprehensive and consistent safety net which ensures the government can continue to support singles and families experiencing high out-of-pocket costs because of particular medical events. It does this whilst streamlining the Medicare safety net arrangements and, most importantly, contributing to the sustainability of our world-leading Medicare system. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (20:56): What a contribution that was! The member for Barker talked about the sustainability of Medicare when all this legislation is an attack on the sustainability of Medicare. He should hang his head in shame that he would dare to come into this chamber and say that this legislation will lead to the sustainability of Medicare. This bill, the Health Insurance Amendment (Safety Net) Bill 2015, will lead to a situation where Medicare is less sustainable. The member for Barker talked about maintaining the safety net and, in the first part of his contribution to this debate, he repeatedly spoke about delivering efficiencies. I am yet to understand how this legislation does anything to maintain the safety net. What it does is erode the safety net, and those on the other side of this House need to be honest with the people of Australia and explain just how it erodes the safety net.

Those opposite talk about this bill providing a better Medicare system. It will certainly not provide a better Medicare system. It will lead to a weaker Medicare system.
two-tiered Medicare system. This bill really shows the ideological bent of those on the other side of this House. This legislation will lead to cost-shifting, because it will force more people to utilise public hospitals as they will not be able to afford to access doctors in the private sector because the costs will be so great.

This legislation is supposed to be a measure to simplify Medicare safety net arrangements. I see this bill as legislation that will erode the benefits that are paid to those people who rely on the Medicare safety net. It is like all measures that the government has sought to introduce in the health field—and I probably could be so bold as to say in most areas. It is poorly designed and, in this case, it is very bad health policy. I know that there has been very little consultation in relation to this, and I know that there has been an enormous amount of criticism—which I will talk about later in my contribution in this debate. This bill signals yet again that this government's approach to health is to cut benefits to Australians and to force the cost of health care onto individual Australians. The government really is determined to see the Medicare system that exists at the moment transformed into one that fits in with its philosophy and ideology.

**ADJOURNMENT**

_The SPEAKER_ (21:00): It being 9 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Africa**

_Ms BRODTMANN_ (Canberra) (21:00): In September I represented the opposition at the second Australia-Africa Dialogue, co-hosted by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and the Brenthurst Foundation, which is based in South Africa. I was there with my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence and member for Gippsland.

The dialogue was held in Zambia and it highlighted the fact that, apart from mining, the relationship between Australia and the nations of Africa is pretty underdone. Despite the fact that 200 Australian mining companies are involved in over 700 projects in Africa, despite the fact that the Australia-Africa Chamber of Commerce and the Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations have been recently established and despite the fact that Africa will be home to one billion people by 2050, many Australians still associate the African continent as one of need and tragedy rather than one of opportunity and optimism. Fortunately, that perception is changing, albeit gradually, and the potential for shared opportunities between Australia and the world's fastest growing continent were explored at the dialogue.

The African delegation was incredibly impressive. It was a highly educated, articulate and formidable group drawn from a range of sectors including mining, legal, security and public policy. Africa's best and brightest, including a group of exceptional women, were drawn together to discuss peace, security and areas for future cooperation. The areas identified included: public health and hygiene education; deployable health units; creative industries, since African countries are home to talented and diverse creative entrepreneurs, and we need to explore how we can work together to better realise and commercialise that talent; road safety education, since Africa has only two per cent of the world's vehicles but contributes 16 per cent to global road deaths; agriculture, particularly in improving yield and calorific value from extreme, hostile and drought conditions; energy, because like we have seen in China and
India, as the middle class in Africa grows so too will be the demand for reliable and universal energy, and Australia has expertise across the spectrum in this area; and also in governance.

Australia has made a significant investment in governance in our region for decades. Good governance underpins a strong democracy, as we know. I can see real potential here because the democracies in Africa are relatively new—full democracy in South Africa is just over 20 years old. But the challenge African nations are currently facing is getting their people to see democracy as perpetual, and not just as going to an election. The challenge for African nations is to empower people to be active citizens, to regard democracy as more than just casting a vote, to demand strong government that embraces democratic freedoms, to expect sound public institutions that serve the community and to call for robust oppositions that shine a light into the dark corners. What concerns these leaders is the cult of personalities and the ensuing leadership vacuums that are the regular hallmark of African politics and the limited expectation of citizens, resulting in little engagement in the day-to-day process of democracy. Like Australia, the hope is the same: hope for an active citizenry that shapes and engages in its future each and every day and not just every three years by numbering boxes at a polling booth.

I also participated in a panel on women and discussed issues that are confronting both Australia and Africa: the stain of domestic violence, the gender pay gap, cultural stereotyping and gender inequality more broadly. With those 200 Nigerian schoolgirls in mind, I also discussed the opportunity provided by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 review to re-examine and recast the position of women, peace and security in today's world of violent extremism, social media and non-state actors operating outside traditional paradigms. There is an opportunity to gain a steely resolve to act upon, not just talk about, the institutionalised sexual violence of women and children as a central aspect of ideology and operations and a tactic of terrorism and, most importantly, there is an opportunity to address the nub of the issue: the complex and challenging task of gender inequality, ensuring women are not only around the table in post-conflict and peace negotiations, but that they are in the leadership positions to help avoid conflict in the first place.

Finally, I feel privileged to have represented the opposition at the dialogue and I want to thank Peter Jennings, Anthony Bergin and Lisa Sharland for including me. It has broadened and deepened my understanding of the issues facing the nations of Africa today.

**Fiscal Policy**

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (21:05): On this quiet evening I wish to talk about fiscal reform. Our economy allows us to build a great society, but what is it that should be our endgame? What do we want to achieve from our economy? What should we do, and—if we do it—will it get us there? Currently, the broader community is having discussions about tax reform, GST, superannuation, negative gearing, welfare expenditure and fairness. I have a strong belief that we should focus on two very important fundamentals when we talk about fiscal reform: firstly, Australians should be able to be gainfully employed; and secondly, Australians should be able to afford to buy their first home.

We need to ensure that we can help people have a job. There is a sense of worth in a job. There is something honest about being able to work. I remember talking to an older farmer one time—a guy by the name of Norm Jeffries, who has now passed away. We were talking about doing hard, physical work and being tired at the end of the day. He said, 'It is a good,
honest feeling to be able to go to bed at night knowing you've done some physical work.' Our reforms about getting Australians jobs should be looking at flexibility. I think there is a discussion to be had about industrial reforms and about the removal of penalty rates in recognition that we do have a 24-hour economy, but allowing employees to benefit from the upside of a company or a business that they work with to create a sense of ownership. The reforms should be about opportunity. We have to ensure that we can get Australians to get on that first rung of the ladder in the job market. People have to have training, some encouraging and some mentoring to get on the first rung of the ladder, and we need stronger encouragement for small business to employ people.

There also has to be an obligation—an obligation to take the job that is available and to be mindful that unemployment benefits are a support but they are not a destination. In thinking through the obligation, I say to our young Australians that we want you to have a future, we want you to have a job and we want you to succeed. It is our focus as a government to drive that reform.

Australians should also be able to buy their first. It worries me that increasingly the dream of acquiring home ownership is moving beyond the reach of many young Australians. To quote the great guy by the name of Darryl Kerrigan from The Castle, he said, 'It is not a house; it is a home. A man's home is his castle.' That epitomises what it is all about—that sense of place.

At a time when interest rates are low, there is, I believe, a failure in policy that it should be possible to encourage first-half home ownership without reducing the current values of real estate properties. Young Australians, I believe, should not have to compete with the world when purchasing a house. I was recently in Malaysia and reading of the great opportunities in the Malaysian papers about how cashed-up investors can buy housing property in Australia. I think greater oversight of investment rules is important.

I also think there is an argument for restrictions on negative gearing for third properties. Certainly a person should be able to buy their primary residence and then, perhaps as a couple, save up for an investment property. Negative gearing does allow for private investment to address issues with housing, instead of the government stepping into public housing. But I do wonder whether negative gearing should be available for purchases of third properties. There is an argument that we need to look at that as part of tax reform and also that that is only inhibiting people who are substantially well off from competing in the housing market with first-home buyers. Also with interest rates where they are, in a lot of cases things should be positively geared not negatively geared, so I do not think that would be an inhibitor to encourage investment.

Those two focuses need to be the endgame as we think through reform, as we have a broader discussion about tax reform and as we have a broad discussion about our economy. Alternatively, if you can have every Australian who wants to work gainfully employed, that is a strong economy and, if they can purchase a property and live out the Australian dream, those two things are what we should always focus on. If we can focus on those two things, many things will fall into place.

There is value, as we have this broader discussion, of stating where our endgame wants to be and working backwards from that. That is, I think, a great way to lead policy direction.
Gellibrand Electorate: Australia-India Relations

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (21:10): This week, hundreds of thousands of Australians will be celebrating the ancient festival of Diwali, also known as the 'festival of lights'. In India and throughout the world, the Indian diaspora will be preparing to celebrate with friends and family with lights, fireworks, musical performances, henna paintings and all kinds of magnificent food. For anyone that has not attended a celebration, the festival of lights is a fantastic experience, one that is celebrated differently by different communities, but always with an emphasis on the awareness of the inner light.

Thanks to a decade of strong migration to Australia from India, Diwali is here to stay as a celebration across our cities and suburbs. This celebration is just one of many examples of the growing person-to-person connections between Australia and India and the growing prominence of the Indian-Australian community. Australia and India have always had a good relationship, but in recent years our ties have grown even stronger. Between 2007 and 2011, over 13 per cent of Australia's migrants were from India alone and today there are well over 400,000 people of Indian origin living in Australia, with Hinduism our fastest growing religion.

Last year Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Australia in 28 years, whipping up a storm of excitement in the community unlike any other we have seen for a state visit before. This year also marked the inaugural Australia-India Leadership Dialogue, an important forum, which will no doubt grow in significance over time, designed to bring together government officials, senior politicians and business people from both countries to deepen engagement and develop connections.

Indian cultural and religious festivals fill my calendar, as an MP with a large Indian-Australian community. Last week, I attended the Floral Festival with the Melbourne Telangana Forum, and just before that I attended the Navratri with Yuva Gujarat in Altona North, where thousands of local residents celebrated and danced the garba well into the night.

I have been to more Diwali and Holi celebrations than I could count. These events are a testament to Australia's multiculturalism—a model of multiculturalism where we all come together as equal Australians with a shared belief in the liberal-democratic ideals that we live under here, but also celebrating the different cultural heritages that we bring to this nation. As former Premier of Victoria Steve Bracks was known to say, 'There is nothing more Australian than being a migrant.'

Melbourne's west is the fastest growing region in Australia and a lot of that growth comes from the emerging Indian-Australian community. But Australian multiculturalism only works because we work at it. On the government side, this means working to ensure that newly arrived Australians are given the support they need to become fully equal, economic and political citizens in our nation. Two weeks ago I joined community leaders at the Australian Foundation of Non-Resident Indians with the Indian Consulate to hear about the issues affecting newly arrived Indian-Australians and their communities. Just as politicians want to attend festivities and celebrate with the Indian-Australian community during the good times, it is essential that we are available to listen to the issues confronted by a new community and the problems of transition that arise, and then to work on them together.
One of the challenges that were raised at this forum was a lack of understanding around cultural norms and traditional practices in Indian culture. Our multicultural society necessitates that we engage with emerging cultures in a spirit of tolerance and respect—it is a key element of Australia's multicultural success story. Of course, one of these is religious tolerance and respect. This year I have been sent a series of images of a Sydney-based brewing company that is selling ginger beer with the Hindu deities Ganesha and Laxmi on its label, or an approximation of these deities.

To those who do not understand the significance of these images, this may seem light-hearted and a bit of fun graphic design, but anyone who listens to the Australian-Indian community will soon appreciate that the use of these images in this way is deeply offensive to Hindus, Sikhs and people from South Asia more broadly. The offence is particularly acute given that ginger beer does contain a proportion of alcoholic content. There is no law against this but I call on all Australians to show tolerance and respect for our fellow Australian citizens in the diverse multicultural society we live in, to treat others in the way we would expect to be treated. The use of these sacred representations in this way might not mean much to you or to someone from a non-Indian background but it means a great deal to many members of the Australian-Indian community.

It is our responsibility as members of this shared society to stand up for these emerging communities and to try to understand cultures other than our own and ultimately to show respect. It is up to every one of us to play our part in empowering our emerging communities. I will be doing my bit in January next year when I travel to India to be a part of the Australia-India Youth Dialogue. In this week of Diwali, I wish the Indian-Australian community a prosperous year ahead. I look forward to sharing many more prosperous years to come as members of a successful multicultural community.

McMillan Electorate: Darnum War Memorial

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (21:15): I identify with the member's words and I congratulate him on his address.

Last Sunday was a beautiful morning in Gippsland. It was as if the weather had been organised for the event. It was just perfect last Sunday morning when I gathered with the people of Darnum and district as they proudly unveiled a new place of remembrance that it took them 12 months to put together and complete. Funded with a federal government grant, this project was driven by the will of the community and is testament to the strength and pride that abides in this beautiful place in the forecourt of the Darnum Hall.

For many years the war memorial was situated beside the Princes Highway, running alongside the hamlet of Darnum. Many ceremonies have been interrupted in the past by the noise and the danger of the proximity of traffic. The highway was then duplicated, and the memorial stayed in the same place. The Bonlac overpass then overshadowed the memorial—as well as the new Bonlac milk factory. When federal government funding became available, the community decided to move the local monument to a more tranquil location. They mobilised and they rallied to the call together.

The President of the Darnum and District Progress Association, Mr Mark Sage, noted the dedication and community spirit that was obvious as this project gradually gathered momentum. He particularly congratulated Mrs Irene Broadbent—she is no relation of mine.
but I would gladly claim her as a sister tomorrow—for her unwavering dedication to this project. Irene has spent many hours coordinating and organising the different facets of the project and, with the support of the community and local business, she has created an area to be most proud of.

There is a great sense of community in Darnum. It was supported by Bendigo Bank and others who gave most generously with their time. We gathered with the local state member, Mr Gary Blackwood, who attended and spoke beautifully of a legacy honoured and, along with Baw Baw Mayor, Councillor Debbie Brown, praised the community for their will and determination to get the job done.

No event like this is complete without the local CFA, and after the laying of the wreaths and the singing of the national anthem by the Darnum Primary School—which I have to say was magnificent—the morning tea/lunch was something to behold. Can you imagine: homemade apple crumble by Irene Broadbent, which is world renowned apple crumble; jelly slice, to die for; and homemade sausage rolls which I had to compete with the children of the Darnum Primary school for—to get a bit of sausage roll and sauce.

As I stood at the new memorial, I could not help thinking of the generations that had gone before, who had sons that never returned home from that horrific theatre of war to Nilma, Darnum or the Warragul district. I also spoke of the pain and grief that still remains today, 100 years on. We are only talking three generations away.

Tomorrow, Remembrance Day will be observed at this new memorial. It will be a solemn occasion and, as those same local residents stand there as part of the Baw Baw community 100 years on, there will be empty chairs and spaces that should have been filled by people we actually knew who died serving this great country. A number of times I have spoken about these issues. In all of my country areas it has been really sad to know that the cream of our young men went away at that time, never to return to their football teams, never to return to their families, never to return to their mums. I think there was something really solemn about this event, the moving of the memorial to another place after all those years. The children of the Darnum Primary School had pleaded with the RSL—we had the local Warragul RSL there—to move the memorial.

Finally funding was made available by the federal government to do what should have been done years ago. I cannot help but congratulate the whole team, but especially Irene Broadbent for driving everybody bonkers through this whole exercise to make sure she got the job done. And she did. She got the job done. And it is not only a pleasant place in a tranquil surrounding: it is a place where many ceremonies will be held in the years to come. I congratulate the committee, the whole of the Darnum community—especially Bendigo Bank for their support—and all who were part of the occasion.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Mr CLARE (Blaxland) (21:20): There is a new movie out in January called Spotlight. It is based on a true story. A story of six brave and relentless journalists at The Boston Globe who, through their work, uncovered and exposed some of the most appalling crimes committed and kept secret for up to 75 years. As a result of their work, five priests were charged and went to prison, more than 500 victims filed abuse claims and more than 60 churches in Massachusetts were shut.
Here in Australia there is a similar story, another brave and relentless journalist, this time at the *Newcastle Herald*. The journalist's name is Joanne McCarthy. She is a Walkley Award winner. She won the Gold Walkley in 2013 for the work she did on the sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley region. I was in the audience the night she won and I remember she said she never wanted to be a journalist. She wanted to be a librarian. I remember she thanked the victims and their families for trusting her to tell their stories and she most poignantly said: 'It just shows you don't need an army. You just need people believing that something had to be done'. Joanne is one of those people. As a result of her work today we have the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The royal commission has been very busy. Over the last two years it has heard the stories of 3,704 people affected by child sexual abuse; 1,563 people still waiting for a private session with the royal commission. The commission had also received 4,760 written accounts of abuse at the hands of churches, homes, orphanages and schools.

This is just one story: the story of Stan. Stan was placed in several orphanages before arriving at the Christian Brothers' orphanage in Victoria. Brother Benton came to the orphanage in 1953, and not long after his arrival he started raping 12-year-old Stan three times a week for more than two years. It took Stan 59 years to get to the stage of being able to talk about what had happened to him. He says that he did not even talk about it with other boys at the time about what had happened but was now aware that Brother Benton was abusing others. Two of those boys later committed suicide.

There are too many stories like this. There are thousands and thousands of stories like this and they are a savage indictment on the institutions that allowed this to happen and the governments who oversaw it. In September the royal commission issued an important report. It recommends the establishment of a national redress scheme. I am the patron of the Care Leavers Australia Network, an organisation run by the amazing Leonie Sheedy that advocates for the survivors of abuse and has been campaigning for this scheme for over a decade. I have said before in this chamber that I think we should do this, and I am proud to say two weeks ago Bill Shorten announced that a Shorten Labor government will do this, committing to invest $33 million to implement a national redress scheme.

The commission has recommended the cost of redress be met by the perpetrators of the abuse, with Commonwealth, state and territory governments acting as a funder of last resort. The Catholic Church has already set aside $1 billion for redress. The New South Wales and Victorian state governments have also said that they back the establishment of this scheme.

A Labor government will do this, but we should not have to wait until the next election to make this happen. The current Prime Minister knows how important this is. He was part of the national apology to forgotten Australians, the half a million Australians who grew up in orphanages, children's homes and other institutions who were subject to terrible cruelty and abuse. The apology was six years ago next Monday.

He said on that day in the Great Hall packed with hundreds of Australians, many of whom suffered horrendous abuse and neglect:

You were abandoned and betrayed by governments, churches and charities.

…… …
We are sorry because none of us can give back what was taken. We are sorry because not one of us here today has the power to undo the damage done. We are sorry because we cannot restore to you the one thing to which all children should be entitled as a basic right – a safe and beloved childhood. We are sorry because, across the generations, the system failed you; the nation failed you, by looking the other way.

Malcolm Turnbull is now the Prime Minister of Australia and, although he cannot give back what was taken or undo the damage that was done to these people, he now has an opportunity to make this right and to do the right thing. I call upon the Prime Minister of Australia tonight to help set things right, implement the recommendations of the royal commission and establish a national redress scheme.

**Brisbane Electorate: Small Business**

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (21:25): I rise tonight to speak of recent small business success stories from my electorate of Brisbane. As an electorate that includes the CBD and the inner-city rim, Brisbane is home to some 30,000 small businesses. As the daughter of small business owners and from my own experience working in business, I know the value and importance of small businesses to our local community and, more broadly, to our nation.

Small business is the biggest employer in the country and the bedrock to our economy, and this is why this government is committed to seeing the smallest business achieve the biggest outcomes. But a commitment cannot come without funding, so I am delighted that five small businesses in my electorate have recently taken advantage of the grant funding available to them and are using this to innovate, grow and ultimately to improve our community.

The list includes Alpha Finance, a local business in Fortitude Valley area in my electorate that provides professional services in car finance, car hire and airport parking. They recently secured a $45,000 grant under the Australian government’s Industry Skills Fund that they will use to invest in their staff so they can take advantage of new market opportunities opening in their sector.

Another recipient of the Government’s Industry Skills Fund is Corpdevel Technologies, who received more than $4,000. They will use this vital funding to upskill their electricians to grow their business across the state. It is the willingness to invest themselves that will produce the success these businesses are striving for.

Another great little performer was Vald Performance Pty Ltd. They received just over $493,000 under the Australian government’s Accelerating Commercialisation program to commercialise the NorBord system. This system is absolutely incredible. It enables elite sporting teams to assess hamstring strength and provides valuable insights into the most commonly injured muscle group for running based sports. As Brisbane is a keen sporting community and home to a number of elite sports men and women and internationally-recognised sporting grounds and teams, this funding will play a vital role in the continued growth and development of Brisbane’s sport services industry.

Two other local businesses I would like to talk about tonight were also recipients in the latest round of the Australian government's Accelerating Commercialisation program. Cloud Manager and Scio Technologies received just under $1 million in funding between them to help accelerate their businesses to a commercialisation phase. The funding will now allow the likes of Cloud Manager to put their cloud brokerage services onto the world stage, showcasing it to some of the biggest investment firms in the United States. To put into
perspective the size of the growing industry that is cloud brokerage: IBM paid $2 billion for a similar company just last week. This shows that local businesses like Cloud Manager are tapping into the most lucrative and exciting industries emerging thanks to this new digital age.

By putting in place the policies like these grants to drive growth and job creation, we will be placing Brisbane and Australia in a position to prosper in a very difficult global environment. Through these policies the constituents in my electorate can see firsthand that this government is working hard to ensure Australia remains a strong economic power. As an open market economy in a much larger competitive world, we must be more productive, more innovative and more competitive. A growing economy is the best and only real way to guarantee jobs for the future and ensure people and families do not get left behind.

We as a government will continue to deliver practical, common-sense policy that will improve economic security and general wellbeing. We will back the abilities and efforts of Australians to build opportunities for their future. I want to congratulate each of these five businesses for their uniqueness and innovation and wish them all the very best for their futures, as they are the generators of growth and jobs in our economy.

The SPEAKER: It being 9:30 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 21:30

NOTICES

The following notice(s) were given:

Mr Dutton: to present a Bill for an Act to repeal the Migration (Visa Evidence) Charge Act 2012, and for related purposes.

Ms Parke: to move:

That this House:

(1) notes continuing concerns in relation to the practice of harvesting organs from prisoners in the People's Republic of China, in addition to allegations of an illegal organ harvesting trade in other parts of Asia and in Europe; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

(a) acknowledge the illegal trade of organs as a significant health policy and human rights issue in the international community and publicly condemn organ transplant abuses;

(b) engage in international dialogue, in a human rights context, relating to the harvesting of organs, ensuring cooperation to protect the poorest and most vulnerable groups from organ transplant tourism and the illegal sale of tissues and organs through the development of tools to ensure traceability of organs;

(c) consider federal measures and encourage Australian states and territories to consider measures to ensure that trafficking of human organs is addressed;

(d) urge the Chinese Government to immediately cease the practice of harvesting organs from prisoners;

(e) support and encourage universal adoption and implementation of the WHO Guiding Principles on Human Organ Transplantation regarding protection of donors, transparency and the implementation of quality systems including vigilance and traceability; and

(f) urge the Chinese Government to increase efforts to set up an organised and efficient national register of organ donation and distribution, and to cooperate with requests from the United Nations Special Rapporteurs and other international bodies and governments for investigations into the system.
Mr Katter: to present a Bill for an Act to provide for the protection of certain borrowers who default on the repayment of credit, and for related purposes.

Mr Katter: to present a Bill for an Act to amend the Privacy Act 1988, and for related purposes.

Ms Claydon: to move:
That this House:
(1) notes that:
   (a) three diseases—HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria—still account for the deaths of more than 2.7 million people each year;
   (b) since 2000, increased action by national governments and international donors on prevention and detection of and treatment for these diseases has led to significant reductions in cases of and deaths from each disease;
   (c) the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) has played a significant role in this progress, and has supported programs with the following outcomes:
      (i) increasing the number of people with HIV with access to antiretroviral therapy to 8.1 million;
      (ii) making available testing and treatment for tuberculosis to 13.2 million people; and
      (iii) supporting the distribution of 548 million insecticide treated bed nets to prevent malaria; and
   (d) the Global Fund contributes more than $US4 billion to combat the three diseases each year, and accounts for more than 20 per cent of international funding for HIV, half of international funding for malaria and three quarters of funding for tuberculosis;
(2) recognises:
   (a) the proposed Sustainable Development Goals include a target to end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria by 2030;
   (b) achieving this target will require increased investment by national governments, national aid agencies and multilateral agencies such as the Global Fund; and
   (c) increased investment in addressing these diseases now will reduce the risk of much greater costs, especially from drug resistance, in the future; and
(3) calls on the Government to continue and consider increasing its support for the Global Fund for the next replenishment period, 2017 to 2019.

Mr Christensen: to move:
That this House:
(1) notes:
   (a) the importance of a robust and clear legal system that allows for timely judicial review and certainty for investors and the community alike;
   (b) the latest legal challenge brought by the Melbourne based Australian Conservation Foundation to the development of the Galilee Basin is another cynical attempt to abuse due process;
   (c) ongoing 'green' lawfare is holding Queensland families to ransom and jeopardising Australia's reputation as a place to do business; and
   (d) that rather than protecting the environment, the replacement of the Galilee Basin's lower emission coal by higher emission coal from other countries could instead cause an increase in global emissions; and
(2) calls on the Australian Labor Party to support legislative amendments to close legal loopholes being exploited by 'green' groups.
QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Copenhagen Consensus Center
(Question No. 799)

Ms MacTiernan asked the Minister representing the Minister for Education and Training, in writing, on 25 May 2015:—

(1) When was the former Minister or his department first approached to fund a research centre in conjunction with the Copenhagen Consensus Center (CCC), and to whom was this approach made.

(2) Did the former Minister at any time meet with Dr Bjorn Lomborg or any representative of the CCC to discuss funding opportunities; if so, on what dates were those meetings.

(3) What process was used to assess the request for funding assistance.

(4) Was an in-principle decision made to fund the project before an approach was made by his department to the University of Western Australia (UWA) to co-fund this project.

(5) Did the former Minister at any time approach the UWA in relation to establishing a collaboration with Dr Lomborg and the CCC; and will the Minister release the document wherein any approach was made to the UWA; if not, why not.

(6) What other universities were approached to consider sponsoring the research centre.

(7) Was the former Minister, his office or his department contacted by the Prime Minister's office in connection with the establishment of the research centre; if so, on what date(s) did that contact occur.

(8) Did the Minister's department instruct the UWA not to reference the contribution of federal funding when announcing it was establishing a research centre on 2 April 2015.

(9) From which line item within his department's budget was the allocation made.

Mr Hartsuyker: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) The Office of the Associate Secretary, Higher Education, Research and International, in the Department of Education and Training was first advised of this matter on 27 June 2014.

(2) The contents of the former Minister's diary are confidential.

(3) The Government made a decision to support bringing Dr Lomborg's consensus method to Australia because of the contribution it could make to difficult and wide-ranging national and international policy issues and debate. The decision to fund the UWA was based on the proposal developed between UWA and the Copenhagen Consensus Centre.

(4) The Government made an in-principle decision to bring the Copenhagen Consensus Center method to Australia prior to the UWA proposal being developed.

(5) The former Minister did not approach UWA in relation to establishing a collaboration with Dr Lomborg and the CCC. On 13 August 2014, Dr Lomborg advised the department that he was in discussion with potential collaborators to establish a consensus centre in Australia. The proposal submitted by the UWA arose from those discussions.

(6) See answer to question 5.

(7) The Prime Minister wrote to the former Minister for Education and Training on 19 January 2015, confirming the allocation of funds to the Department of Education and Training from the contingency reserve.

(8) No.

(9) Funding for 2014–15 was appropriated from consolidated revenue through Appropriation Act (No.3) 2014–15.
The former Minister for Education and Training, the Hon Christopher Pyne MP, provided this answer to the House of Representatives table office on 18 September 2015. On 7 October 2015, the department was advised by the table office that due to the ministerial reshuffle on 21 September the answer needed to be re-submitted, as authorised by the new Minister and sent by the new Minister representing.

**Department of Industry, Innovation and Science: Office Equipment**  
*(Question No. 1022)*

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on the purchase and/or lease of (a) food and beverage equipment, and (b) exercise equipment, for staff in the (i) Minister's office, and (ii) departmental office(s).

**Mr Pyne**: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(a) (i) Nil. (ii) Nil.
(b) (i) Nil. (ii) $199 (GST exclusive). This cost was for the department's FITTER initiative which aims to increase the health and fitness of all departmental employees.

**Department of Veterans' Affairs: Office Equipment**  
*(Question No. 1024)*

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015.

What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on the purchase and/or lease of (a) food and beverage equipment, and (b) exercise equipment, for staff in the (i) Minister's office, and (ii) departmental office(s).

**Mr Robert**: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
In the 2014-15 financial year, the Department of Veterans' Affairs incurred the following expenditure:
(a) on food and beverage equipment:
   (i) Nil in the Minister's office;
   (ii) $692 in the departmental office; and
(b) on exercise equipment for staff in the
   (i) Minister's office—nil; and
   (ii) departmental office—nil.

**Department of Health: Office Equipment**  
*(Question No. 1029)*

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on the purchase and/or lease of (a) food and beverage equipment, and (b) exercise equipment, for staff in the (i) Minister's office, and (ii) departmental office(s).

**Ms Ley**: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(a) (i) In 2014-2015 a sum of $144.45 was spent on the purchase of food and beverage equipment for staff in the Minister's office.
(ii) In 2014-2015 a sum of $14,463.00 was spent on the purchase of food and beverage equipment for staff in departmental offices.

(b) Nil

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Legal Services and Credit Cards

(Question No. 1030)

Mr Conroy asked the Prime Minister in writing, on 17 August 2015:
What sum did the Ministers department spend in 2014-15 on (a) legal services, and (b) credit cards.

Mr Turnbull: As the Honourable Member is aware, I was sworn in as Prime Minister on 15 September 2015. As the honourable member's question relates to matters before that date, I am advised by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet that the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) In accordance with the Legal Services Directions 2005 issued by the Attorney-General, the Department publishes on its website the total internal and external legal services expenditure, including the total expenditure on counsel


In 2014-15 the Department's total legal services expenditure was $6,522,391.61 (GST incl.).

(b) In 2014-15, the Department did not incur any direct expenditure for credit cards but incurred $13,386,449.41 (GST incl.) expenditure on credit cards.

Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Legal Services and Credit Cards

(Question No. 1036 Amended)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) legal services, and (b) credit cards.

Mr Joyce: The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(a) The total expenditure on legal services was $1,937,000, excluding GST.

(b) Total corporate credit card expenditure, for various supplier and travel costs in 2014-15, was $17,851,610, including GST.

Department of Social Services: Legal Services and Credit Cards

(Question No. 1038)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) legal services, and (b) credit cards.

Mr Porter: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) In accordance with Legal Services Directions 2005 the Department will provide a report to the Attorney-General's Department within 60 days of the end of the financial year on its legal service expenditure. The Department's legal services expenditure for the 2014-15 financial year will be made publicly available on the Department's website by 30 October 2015.

(b) The Department's expenditure in 2014-15 on credit cards was $9,471,606.18.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Department of Human Services: Legal Services and Credit Cards  
(Question No. 1039)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) legal services, and (b) credit cards.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(a) The Department of Human Services (the department) spent $35,027,166.27 in 2014-15 on legal services.
(b) The department spent $12,565,986.81 on credit cards in 2014-15.

Department of Industry, Innovation and Science: Legal Services and Credit Cards  
(Question No. 1040)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) legal services, and (b) credit cards.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(a) The department publishes its annual legal expenditure on its website. Information for 2014-15 can be viewed by following this link: http://www.industry.gov.au/AboutUs/LegalandLegislativeReporting/Pages/DepartmentalExpenditureOnLegalServices.aspx
The department also reports detailed information on legal services purchasing to the Office of Legal Services Coordination in accordance with the requirements of the Legal Services Directions 2005. This information is provided by the end of August each year. The Attorney-General's Department publishes an annual report which provides consolidated information on agency legal services expenditure. The report is available at the following website: www.ag.gov.au/Publications/Pages/CommonwealthLegalServicesExpenditure.aspx.
(b) $16,786,938 (GST inclusive). All Whole of Australian Government travel-related expenses (eg. domestic and international flights, domestic accommodation and rental car hire) must now be charged to a Diners account which is linked to the officer's Commonwealth credit card.

Department of Veterans' Affairs: Legal Services and Credit Cards  
(Question No. 1042)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) legal services, and (b) credit cards.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(a) The Department of Veterans' Affairs spent $10.04 million on legal services between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015.
(b) The Department of Veterans' Affairs spent $2,646,981 via corporate credit card between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015.
Department of Communications: Legal Services and Credit Cards
(Question No. 1043)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) legal services, and (b) credit cards.

Mr Fletcher: The Minister for Communications has provided the answer to the member's question is as follows:
The Department of Communications spend in 2014-15:
(a) Legal Services: $3,760,375.40 (ex GST)
(b) Credit cards: $2,151,944.59 (ex GST)

Department of Social Services: Mobile Phones and Tablets
(Question No. 1056)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
(1) What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on the purchase and/or lease of (a) mobile phones, and (b) tablet devices for (i) Ministerial staff, and (ii) departmental staff. (2) What sum was spent on telecommunications contracts associated with these devices by (i) Ministerial staff, and (ii) departmental staff.

Mr Porter: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Below is the sum spent on the purchase of mobile phones and tablet devices, and their associated telecommunications costs for ministerial staff for 2014-15:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobile phone purchases</th>
<th>Mobile phone telecommunication costs</th>
<th>Tablet devices purchases</th>
<th>Tablet telecommunication costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$13,776</td>
<td>$5,880</td>
<td>$6,632</td>
<td>$4,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below is the sum spent on the purchase of mobile phones and tablet devices, and their associated telecommunications costs for departmental staff for 2014-15:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobile phone purchases</th>
<th>Mobile phone telecommunication costs</th>
<th>Tablet devices purchases</th>
<th>Tablet telecommunication costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$318,408</td>
<td>$144,480</td>
<td>$64,602</td>
<td>$47,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Department of Human Services: Mobile Phones and Tablets
(Question No. 1057)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
(1) What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on the purchase and/or lease of (a) mobile phones, and (b) tablet devices for (i) Ministerial staff, and (ii) departmental staff. (2) What sum was spent on telecommunications contracts associated with these devices by (i) Ministerial staff, and (ii) departmental staff.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(1) Phones and tablets expenditure within the 2014-15 financial year was as follows:
(a) Purchase / lease of mobile phones
   (i) The Minister and ministerial staff $0
(ii) Departmental staff $0*

* Within the Managed Telecommunication Services Contract, the department has an allowance per contract period (12 months) for the purchase of mobile phone handsets. The department did not exceed that allowance, thus the cost was $0.

(b) Purchase / lease of tablet devices
  (i) The Minister and ministerial staff $0
  (ii) Departmental staff $4,197,810

(2) Contract expenditure associated with these devices within the 2014-15 financial year was as follows:
  (i) The Minister and ministerial staff $11,971
  (ii) Departmental staff $1,601,282

Department of Industry, Innovation and Science: Mobile Phones and Tablets
(Question No. 1058)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science on 17 August 2015:
(1) What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on the purchase and/or lease of (a) mobile phones, and (b) tablet devices for (i) Ministerial staff, and (ii) departmental staff.
(2) What sum was spent on telecommunications contracts associated with these devices by (i) Ministerial staff, and (ii) departmental staff.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(1) (a) (i) $2,346 (GST exclusive)
  (ii) $25,828 (GST exclusive). This cost includes both mobile phones and tablet devices purchased for departmental staff. To provide further breakdown would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.
(2) (i) $23,535 (GST exclusive). This cost includes all telecommunications contracts for ministerial staff and not just those devices purchased in 2014-15. To provide further breakdown would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.
  (ii) $84,791 (GST exclusive). This cost includes all telecommunications contracts for departmental staff and not just those devices purchased in 2014-15. To provide further breakdown would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.

Department of Veterans' Affairs: Mobile Phones and Tablets
(Question No. 1060)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015.
(1) What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on the purchase and/or lease of (a) mobile phones, and (b) tablet devices for (i) Ministerial staff, and (ii) departmental staff.
(2) What sum was spent on telecommunications contracts associated with these devices by (i) Ministerial staff, and (ii) departmental staff.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(1) The sum of expenditure on the purchase and/or lease of mobile phones and tablet devices for both Ministerial staff and departmental staff are at column C.
(2) The sum of expenditure on telecommunications contracts associated with the devices at column D.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
<th>Column C</th>
<th>Column D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>Purchase/Lease Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Ministerial Staff</td>
<td>(a) Mobile Phones</td>
<td>$0*</td>
<td>$0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Departmental Staff</td>
<td>(a) Mobile Phones (16)</td>
<td>$19,488.00</td>
<td>$18,900.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Ministerial Staff</td>
<td>(b) Tablet devices</td>
<td>$0*</td>
<td>$0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Departmental Staff</td>
<td>(b) Tablet devices (2)</td>
<td>$1,531.20</td>
<td>$210.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>$21,019.20</strong></td>
<td><strong>$19,110.59</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No costs were associated with the purchase and/or lease costs of the Ministerial staff mobile phones and tablet devices as they were re-issued 'second hand' or existing stock phones.

**Monthly contract costs are $35 per device ($30 for 3GB of Data + $5 voice plan for mobile phones and $35 for 4GB of Data for tablet devices) plus excess data charges set in accordance with Whole of Government panel pricing arrangements. To provide a more detailed breakdown of these costs for each individual device for the period 2014-15 would involve considerable time and effort and be too resource intensive.

**Department of Communications: Mobile Phones and Tablets**

(Question No. 1061)

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

1. What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on the purchase and/or lease of (a) mobile phones, and (b) tablet devices for (i) Ministerial staff, and (ii) departmental staff.
2. What sum was spent on telecommunications contracts associated with these devices by (i) Ministerial staff, and (ii) departmental staff.

**Mr Fletcher:** The Minister for Communications has provided the answer to the member's question as follows:

During the 2014-15 Financial Year, the Department spent the following:

1. (a) $36,234 (GST exclusive) on the purchase of mobile phones
   (i) $1,922 (GST exclusive) was expensed for ministerial staff
   (ii) $34,312 (GST exclusive) was expensed for departmental staff
   (b) $2,571 (GST exclusive) on the purchase of tablets.
   (i) $1,870 (GST exclusive) was spent for ministerial staff
   (ii) $701 (GST exclusive) was spent for departmental staff

2. The Department is not able to provide a breakdown of the telecommunications contracts costs associated with these devices for ministerial and departmental staff. Attributing usage costs would require an excessive diversion of departmental resources.

**Department of Social Services: Office Refurbishment**

(Question No. 1074)

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) office refurbishment, and when and where did this occur, and (b) the purchase and/or lease of office furniture.
Mr Porter: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) The Department of Social Services spent a total of $1,690,557.58 GST exclusive on office refurbishment during 2014-2015. This includes security upgrade works and project management fees. The following table shows expenditure by site:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide, 11-29 Waymouth Street</td>
<td>$55,374.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane, 100 Creek Street</td>
<td>$7,050.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin, 39 Woods Street</td>
<td>$31,517.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobart, 100 Melville Street</td>
<td>$56,524.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne, 595 Collins Street</td>
<td>$423,822.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne, 90 Collins Street</td>
<td>$117,186.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth, 15-17 William Street</td>
<td>$281,691.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirius Building, Phillip, ACT</td>
<td>$371,815.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, 300 Elizabeth Street</td>
<td>$92,066.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuggeranong Office Park</td>
<td>$253,509.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,690,557.58</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) $419,555.52 GST exclusive was spent on office furniture across Australia. This includes furniture bought for Work Health and Safety cases following workstation assessments.

Department of Human Services: Office Refurbishment

(Question No. 1075)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) office refurbishment, and when and where did this occur, and (b) the purchase and/or lease of office furniture.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) In 2014-15, the Department of Human Services (the department) spent $59,330,568 on office refurbishment. Attachment A provides the locations and timing of this expenditure.

(b) In 2014-15, the department spent $13,947,108 on office furniture. Of this $13,129,216 is included within the $59,330,568 spent on office refurbishments. In addition, $817,892 was spent on office furniture across the department's property network.

In 2014-15 the department did not lease any office furniture.

Attachment A - Department of Human Services Property Fitout Expenditure - 2014/15 Financial Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Period of Expenditure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corner Park Avenue and Dibbs Street, Adamstown, NSW</td>
<td>January 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>73,865.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191 Pulteney Street, Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>29,523.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88 Grenfell Street, Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>April 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>1,481,000.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 Currie Street, Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>August 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>1,207,812.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>307 Ross River Road, Aitkenvale, QLD</td>
<td>August 2014- to June 2015</td>
<td>1,869,506.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Peels Place, Albany, WA</td>
<td>April 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>29,580.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>430 Wilson Street, Albury, NSW</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>47,681.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Railway Terrace, Alice Springs, NT</td>
<td>August 2014- to June 2015</td>
<td>66,151.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot 548 Angurugu, Groote Eylandt, NT</td>
<td>November 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>220,308.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-12 Albert Street, Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>August 2014 - April 2015</td>
<td>49,939.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Adidi Street, Bamaga, QLD</td>
<td>April 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>42,944.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Period of Expenditure</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 Sebasio Street, Bamaga, QLD</td>
<td>August 2014 - December 2014</td>
<td>601,636.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-14 Meredith Street, Bankstown, NSW</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>18,939.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 William Street, Beaudesert, QLD</td>
<td>February 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>357,798.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockyard Lane, Beenleigh, QLD</td>
<td>August 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>341,279.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-61 Church Street, Bega, NSW</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>115,456.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Chandler Street, Belconnen, ACT</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
<td>2,516.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 First Avenue, Blacktown, NSW</td>
<td>November 2014 - May 2015</td>
<td>113,109.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 George Street, Bowen, QLD</td>
<td>September 2014 - October 2014</td>
<td>4,165.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - 16 Prospect Street, Box Hill, VIC</td>
<td>September 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>101,500.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143 Turbot Street, Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>December 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>17,807.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cnr Creek and Adelaide Street, Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>October 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>10,650.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149 Adelaide Street, Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>December 2014 - February 2015</td>
<td>1,220.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140 Creek Street, Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>October 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>648,184.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 George Street, Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>February 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>62,346.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-22 Pearcedale Parade, Broadmeadows, VIC</td>
<td>May 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>219,978.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 Napier Terrace, Broome, WA</td>
<td>April 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>26,725.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-87 Grand Plaza Drive, Browns Plains, QLD</td>
<td>September 2014 - to June 2015</td>
<td>401,579.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Marine Terrace, Burnie, TAS</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>1,351,080.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 Railway Parade, Burwood, NSW</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>487,240.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-22 George Street, Caboolture, QLD</td>
<td>November 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>437,457.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104 Grafton Street, Cairns, QLD</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
<td>12,196.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Aplin Street, Cairns, QLD</td>
<td>December 2014 - May 2015</td>
<td>29,906.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163-169 Draper Street, Cairns, QLD</td>
<td>February 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>1,797,681.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-21 Anglo Road, Campsie, NSW</td>
<td>August 2014 - to June 2015</td>
<td>311,854.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1290-1298 Albany Highway, Cannington, WA</td>
<td>August 2014 - to June 2015</td>
<td>243,248.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 Redland Bay Road, Capalaba, QLD</td>
<td>August 2014 - to June 2015</td>
<td>194,901.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-21 President Avenue, Caringbah, NSW</td>
<td>February 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>739,258.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 Bradshaw Terrace, Casuarina, NT</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
<td>7,770.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22B East Terrace, Ceduna, SA</td>
<td>August 2014 - to June 2015</td>
<td>685,883.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>324 Charlestown Road, Charlestown, NSW</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>73,688.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-64 Archer Street, Chatswood, NSW</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>46,445.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Banfield Street, Chermside, QLD</td>
<td>November 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>1,014,507.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203 Rookwood Road, Potts Hill, NSW</td>
<td>November 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>142,126.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-29 Robinson Street, Dandenong, VIC</td>
<td>August 2014 - to June 2015</td>
<td>947,729.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251 Murray Road, Preston, VIC</td>
<td>February 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>45,641.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137-153 Crown Street, Darlinghurst, NSW</td>
<td>November 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>834,609.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Knuckey Street, Darwin, NT</td>
<td>November 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>59,663.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 Clarendon Street, Derby, WA</td>
<td>May 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>158,834.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>480 Mulgrave Road, Earlville, QLD</td>
<td>September 2014 - April 2015</td>
<td>334,806.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Langford Drive, Elizabeth, SA</td>
<td>October 2014 - May 2015</td>
<td>9,405.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-33 Barbara Street, Fairfield, NSW</td>
<td>May 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>19,197.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 Moore Street, Footscray, VIC</td>
<td>August 2014 - December 2015</td>
<td>4,143.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Canberra Avenue, Forrest, ACT</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>79,288.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>435 St Pauls Terrace, Fortitude Valley, QLD</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>38,478.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-73 Webb Street, Narre Warren, VIC</td>
<td>April 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>306,734.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 Adelaide Street, Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>December 2014 - June 2015</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geraldton, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Bogong Avenue, Glenn Waverley, VIC</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>490,768.17</td>
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<td>September 2014 - March 2015</td>
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<tr>
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<td>September 2014 - May 2015</td>
<td>130,217.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>134 Reed Street, Tuggeranong, ACT</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-97 Yambil Street, Griffith, NSW</td>
<td>October 2014 - June 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 O'Connell Street, Gympie, QLD</td>
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<td>68 Reid Promenade, Joondalup, WA</td>
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<td>February 2015 - May 2015</td>
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<td>12 Greenfields Boulevard, Mt Pleasant, Mackay, QLD</td>
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<td>April 2015 - June 2015</td>
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<td>24-26 Tuckey Street, Mandurah, WA</td>
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<td>5 Maud Street, Maroochydore, QLD</td>
<td>November 2014 - May 2015</td>
<td>988,390.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>136-138 Maroubrua Road, Maroubrua, NSW</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
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<td>314-316 Marrickville Road, Marrickville, NSW</td>
<td>September 2014 - May 2015</td>
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<td>August 2014 - June 2015</td>
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<td>38 Rudloe Road, Morley, WA</td>
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<td>57 Sanders Street, Mt Gravatt, QLD</td>
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<td>164-166 Bridge Street, Muswellbrook, NSW</td>
<td>September 2014 - June 2015</td>
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<td>Corner Currie and Maud Street, Nambour, QLD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Period of Expenditure</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Alexander Kelly Drive, Noarlunga, SA</td>
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<td>4 Lawrence Street, Nowra, NSW</td>
<td>August 2014 - June 2015</td>
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<td>1283-1285 Sandgate Road, Nundah, QLD</td>
<td>September 2014 - June 2015</td>
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<td>88 Atherton Road, Oakleigh, VIC</td>
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<td>327-331 Summer Street, Orange, NSW</td>
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<td>355 Scarborough Beach Road, Perth, WA</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
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<td>31 Trelor Lane, Pakenham, VIC</td>
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<td>1085-1087 Gold Coast Highway, Palm Beach, QLD</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>143,720.50</td>
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<td>Lot 261 Papunya Road, Papunya, NT</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
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<td>2-12 Macquarie Street, Parramatta, NSW</td>
<td>March 2015 - May 2015</td>
<td>33,656.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>130 George Street, Parramatta, NSW</td>
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<td>598 High Street, Penrith, NSW</td>
<td>September 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>1,599,313.52</td>
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<td>770 Hay Street, Perth, WA</td>
<td>May 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>1,572,999.79</td>
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<td>72 Lipson Street, Port Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>August 2014 - June 2015</td>
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<td>21-23 Mackay Street, Port Augusta, SA</td>
<td>August 2014 - May 2015</td>
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<td>7-9 Morisset Street, Queanbeyan, NSW</td>
<td>August 2014 - June 2015</td>
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<td>183 Crawford Street, Queanbeyan, NSW</td>
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<td>140 Redfern Street, Redfern, NSW</td>
<td>September 2014 - May 2015</td>
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<td>2-6 Bond Street, Ringwood, VIC</td>
<td>September 2014 - November 2014</td>
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<td>19-33 Robina Town Centre Drive, Robina, QLD</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>450,679.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Civic Boulevard, Rockingham, WA</td>
<td>March 2015 - April 2015</td>
<td>301,660.91</td>
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<td>5 Fulham Road, Rowville, VIC</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>327,600.40</td>
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<td>19-27 Devlin Street, Ryde, NSW</td>
<td>March 2015 - April 2015</td>
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<td>150-154 York Street, Sale, VIC</td>
<td>September 2014 - November 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lot 321 Alice Road, Santa Teresa, NT</td>
<td>May 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>36,143.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Henry Street, Seymour, VIC</td>
<td>February 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>502,700.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake Entrance Road, Shellharbour, NSW</td>
<td>September 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>629,999.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>296-298 Maude Street, Shepparton, VIC</td>
<td>May 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>199,598.41</td>
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<td>94 York Street, Sth Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>29,412.60</td>
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<td>324-334 Springfield Road, Springvale, VIC</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>503,855.07</td>
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<td>107-109 Macquarie Street, Springwood, NSW</td>
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<td>47 Phillip Street, St Marys, NSW</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>8,172.50</td>
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<td>10 Corumundum Road, Stanthorpe, QLD</td>
<td>May 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>30,372.50</td>
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<td>Cnr Logan Road &amp; Cornwell Street, Stones Corner, QLD</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>943,722.78</td>
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<td>11 Wentworth Parade, Success, WA</td>
<td>August 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>26,698.05</td>
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<td>103 Harvester Road, Sunshine, VIC</td>
<td>March 2015 - June 2015</td>
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<td>300 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>July 2014 - November 2014</td>
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<td>32 Martin Place, Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>November 2014 - June 2015</td>
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<td>11 Faulding Street, Symonston, ACT</td>
<td>December 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>217-223 Peel Street, Tamworth, NSW</td>
<td>August 2014</td>
<td>15,325.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>77 Paterson Street, Tennant Creek, NT</td>
<td>April 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>68,959.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>12-20 Bell Street, Toowoomba, QLD</td>
<td>January 2015 - May 2015</td>
<td>681,362.76</td>
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<td>235-259 Stanley Street, Townsville, QLD</td>
<td>October 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>69,476.53</td>
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<td>13-15 Princes Highway, Traralgon, VIC</td>
<td>February 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>430,934.70</td>
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**Department of Industry, Innovation and Science: Office Refurbishment**  
*(Question No. 1076)*

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science on 17 August 2015:

What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) office refurbishment, and when and where did this occur, and (b) the purchase and/or lease of office furniture.

**Mr Pyne:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) Departmental spend in 2014-15 on office refurbishments is detailed in the following table, noting a response to the first item was previously provided in SI-150.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Period of Expenditure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 Blundell Boulevard, Tweed Heads, NSW</td>
<td>September 2014 - March 2015</td>
<td>196,302.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lot 118 Enterprise Avenue, Tweed Heads, NSW</td>
<td>January 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>2,885,693.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>62 Perdjert Street, Wadeye, NT</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>57,736.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lot 618, Wadeye, NT</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
<td>229,037.61</td>
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<td>63 Tompson Street, Wagga Wagga, NSW</td>
<td>September 2014 - January 2015</td>
<td>177,659.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 Robert Street, Wallsend, NSW</td>
<td>August 2014</td>
<td>3,360.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warriewood Square, Warriewood, NSW</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>12,336.62</td>
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<td>37-39 Albion Street, Warwick, QLD</td>
<td>April 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>66,244.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>129 Pilbarra Street, Welshpool, WA</td>
<td>August 2014</td>
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<td>255 High Street, Prahran, VIC</td>
<td>September 2014 - November 2014</td>
<td>629,641.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-6 Penrhyne House, Woden, ACT</td>
<td>December 2014 - June 2015</td>
<td>1,085,450.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 Station Street, Woodridge, QLD</td>
<td>August 2014 - June 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-27 Hely Street, Wyong, NSW</td>
<td>February 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>105,072.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yarrabah Shopping Centre, Esplanade Road, Yarrabah, QLD</td>
<td>April 2015 - June 2015</td>
<td>216,338.23</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(b) Departmental spend in 2014-15 on the purchase and/or lease of office furniture is detailed in the following table, noting a response to the first item was previously provided in SI-150.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Total Cost (excl GST)</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator, 451 Little Bourke St, Melbourne</td>
<td>$174,997</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Industry and Science, 10 Binara St, Canberra</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator, 451 Little Bourke St, Melbourne</td>
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<td>November 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Industry and Science, 10 Binara St, Canberra</td>
<td>$591,677</td>
<td>April to Jun 2015</td>
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</table>
Department of Veterans' Affairs: Office Refurbishment
(Question No. 1078)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015.
What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) office refurbishment, and when and where did this occur, and (b) the purchase and/or lease of office furniture.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The Department of Veterans' Affairs undertook the following refurbishments during the 2014 / 15 financial year to coincide with lease expiry dates.
(1) Broadbeach office project $961k
   (a) Project finalised in September 2014
   (b) Furniture purchase included overall project cost
(2) Adelaide office restack project $346k
   (a) Project finalised in October 2014
   (b) Furniture purchase included overall project cost
(3) Parramatta VVCS relocation to Sydney office project $530k
   (a) Project finalised in June 2015
   (b) Furniture purchase included overall project cost.

Department of Communications: Office Refurbishment
(Question No. 1079)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 17 August 2015.
What sum did the Minister's department spend in 2014-15 on (a) office refurbishment, and when and where did this occur, and (b) the purchase and/or lease of office furniture.

Mr Fletcher: The Minister for Communications has provided the answer to the member's question as follows:
(a) During 2014-15 the Department expensed $311,157 (GST exclusive) and capitalised $173,530 (GST exclusive) on office refurbishment for our Canberra and Sydney offices.
(b) During 2014-15 the Department expensed $23,180 (GST exclusive) on office furniture for our Canberra and Sydney offices.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Staff Redundancies
(Question No. 1120)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In respect of departmental staff (a) how many redundancies were made in 2014-15, and (b) what is the total cost of payments associated with these redundancies.

Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
During the period 2014-15, there were 165 voluntary redundancies (non-SES employees) and 8 incentives to retire (SES employees) made by the department with a total associated cost of $21.5 million.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Attorney-General's Department: Departmental Staff Redundancies
(Question No. 1122)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In respect of departmental staff (a) how many redundancies were made in 2014-15, and (b) what is the total cost of payments associated with these redundancies.

Mr Keenan: The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
(a) 37
(b) $1,972,439.84

Department of Social Services: Departmental Staff Redundancies
(Question No. 1126)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing on 17 August 2015:
In respect of departmental staff (a) how many redundancies were made in 2014-15, and (b) what is the total cost of payments associated with these redundancies.

Mr Porter: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
During the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, 243 staff ceased with the Department due to voluntary redundancy, including two Social Security Appeals Tribunal staff.
The total cost of payments associated with these redundancies was $15,224,339.07

Department of Human Services: Departmental Staff Redundancies
(Question No. 1127)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In respect of departmental staff (a) how many redundancies were made in 2014-15, and (b) what is the total cost of payments associated with these redundancies.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
There were 60 voluntary redundancies and no involuntary redundancies for the 2014-15 financial year.
The total cost of these redundancies was $7,505,095.44.

Department of Industry, Innovation and Science: Departmental Staff Redundancies
(Question No. 1128)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science on 17 August 2015:
In respect of departmental staff (a) how many redundancies were made in 2014-15, and (b) what is the total cost of payments associated with these redundancies.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
(a) 91.
(b) $9,696,430.
Department of Veterans' Affairs: Departmental Staff Redundancies  
(Question No. 1130)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015.

In respect of departmental staff (a) how many redundancies were made in 2014-15, and (b) what is the total cost of payments associated with these redundancies.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) There were 14 redundancies in 2014-15.

(b) The total cost of redundancy payments was $729,872.86.

Department of Human Services: Departmental Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment  
(Question No. 1179)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of departmental staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

During 2014-15 $9,553 was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced personal issue equipment allocated to departmental staff. The goods replaced were mobile/smart phones and a turbo card.

Department of Industry, Innovation and Science: Departmental Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment  
(Question No. 1180)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of departmental staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Three mobile telephones were reported as lost by departmental staff; the items were replaced from existing stocks at no additional cost.

Department of Veterans' Affairs: Departmental Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment  
(Question No. 1182)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015.

In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of departmental staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

In 2014-15, there was nothing spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of departmental staff.
Department of Communications: Departmental Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment
(Question No. 1183)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of departmental staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Fletcher: The Minister for Communications has provided the answer to the member's question as follows:
During 2014-15, the Department spent $1,244 (GST exclusive) replacing two mobile phones which were lost by departmental staff.

Attorney-General's Department: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment
(Question No. 1197)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of Ministerial staff, and what goods were replaced?

Mr Keenan: The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:
Nil.

Department of Communications: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment
(Question No. 1198)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Arts, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of Ministerial staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Fletcher: The Minister for Communications has provided the answer to the member's question as follows:
Nil.

Minister for Justice: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment
(Question No. 1199)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Justice, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of Ministerial staff, and what goods were replaced?

Mr Keenan: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Nil.
Department of human Services: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment
(Question No. 1208)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of Ministerial staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Nil.

Department of industry, Innovation and Science: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment
(Question No. 1209)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of Ministerial staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Nil.

Department of Veterans' Affairs: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment
(Question No. 1211)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of Ministerial staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
In 2014-15, there was nothing spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of Ministerial staff.

Department of Communications: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment
(Question No. 1213)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of Ministerial staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Fletcher: The Minister for Communications has provided the answer to the member's question is as follows:
In 2014-15, one mobile phone was lost by Ministerial staff and was not replaced.

Department of Human Services: Departmental Staff Domestic and International Travel
(Question No. 1231)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
(1) In 2014-15, what sum was spent on (a) domestic travel, and (b) international travel, for departmental staff.
(2) Of this, (a) on what dates, and to what locations, did the Minister travel, (b) how many departmental staff accompanied the Minister on this travel, and (c) for what purpose was the travel.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

1. (a) The Department of Human Services (DHS) had a total expenditure of $40,234,266 for domestic travel in 2014-15. This total expenditure includes air flights, accommodation, hire cars, meals, incidentals and other travel-related entitlements.

(b) DHS had a total expenditure of $139,384 for international travel in 2014-15. This total expenditure includes air flights, accommodation, meals, incidentals and other travel-related entitlements.

2. DHS does not have information on the Minister's domestic travel details as these arrangements are administered by the Department of Finance.

The report, Parliamentarians' travel costs paid for by the Department of Finance, is tabled biannually and provides details of the dates, purpose of the travel, the countries of destination and the costs of visits.

Department of Industry, Innovation and Science: Departmental Staff Domestic and International Travel

(Question No. 1232)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

1. In 2014-15, what sum was spent on (a) domestic travel, and (b) international travel, for departmental staff.

2. Of this, (a) on what dates, and to what locations, did the Minister travel, (b) how many departmental staff accompanied the Minister on this travel, and (c) for what purpose was the travel.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

1. $10,613,222 was spent on domestic travel and $2,318,763 on international travel in 2014-15 for departmental staff.

2. (a) The Special Minister of State will answer on behalf of all agencies. (b) and (c) Domestic travel by departmental officials accompanying the Minister is not recorded separately from general domestic travel and the provision of the breakdown of this information would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.

Details where departmental staff accompanied the Minister on International travel and for what purpose is provided below:

- **One departmental official - 4-11 November 2014 – Japan, South Korea and India**
  Speaking at the India-Australia Skills Conference (India) and Keynote speech at the LNG Producer-Consumer Conference (Japan). Bilateral meetings and site visits were held in the margins of these engagements and in South Korea.

- **Two departmental officials - 18-27 April 2015 – USA**
  Attend IHS Energy Cambridge Energy Research Associates (CERA) week 2015 Conference. Bilateral meetings were also held with key resources, energy, industry and science stakeholders.

- **One departmental official - 29 June – 4 July – China**
  Key engagements were to meet with Chinese counterparts and key stakeholders in the resources, energy, industry and science sectors.
Department of Veterans' Affairs: Departmental Staff Domestic and International Travel
(Question No. 1234)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015.

(1) In 2014-15, what sum was spent on (a) domestic travel, and (b) international travel, for departmental staff.

(2) Of this, (a) on what dates, and to what locations, did the Minister travel, (b) how many departmental staff accompanied the Minister on this travel, and (c) for what purpose was the travel.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) For the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) spent $5,525,964 on travel for Departmental staff. The figures shown in the table below include spending on fares, accommodation, travelling allowances, car hire, taxis, road tolls and parking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel spend 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic travel spend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,392,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International travel spend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,133,324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are GST exclusive.

(2) The Department of Veterans' Affairs does not have information of the Minister's domestic travel details as these arrangements are administered by the Department of Finance.

The report, *Parliamentarians' travel costs paid for by the Department of Finance*, is tabled biannually and provides details of the dates, purpose of the travel, the countries of destination and the costs of visits.

When the Minister travels overseas on commemorative activities, he is accompanied by an Aide-de-Camp (ADC). The Department reimburses the Department of Defence for the ADC’s travel costs.

During the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, the former Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson, undertook the following international visits.

13 to 22 July 2014—France; represented the Prime Minister at French National Day celebrations and the official opening of the Fromelles Museum and re dedication of Australian Headstones at Fromelles;

10 to 12 September 2014 - Papua New Guinea; represented the Prime Minister to commemorate the capture of German New Guinea and First Australian Casualties of the First World War;

16 to 17 October 2014 - New Zealand; attended several commemorative events surrounding the 100th anniversary of the departure of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force from Wellington to meet up with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in Albany, WA, and joining the convoy sailing for Egypt;

19 to 20 April 2015—New Zealand; attended the dedication ceremony for the Australian War Memorial in Wellington;

20 to 28 April 2015—Turkey, France and Belgium; to attend Anzac Centenary commemorations in Turkey and remembrance ceremonies in France and Belgium. The trip also included the unveiling of the design for the Sir John Monash Centre;

7 to 10 May 2015—France and the United Kingdom; to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Victory in Europe;

8 to 12 June 2015—Borneo; to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the 1945 Borneo Landings (Brunei and Malaysia);
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Departmental Staff Training
(Question No. 1274)

Mr Conroy asked the Prime Minister, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for departmental staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Turnbull: As the Honourable Member is aware, I was sworn in as Prime Minister on 15 September 2015. As the honourable member's question relates to matters before that date, I am advised by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet that the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

In 2014-15:

(a) $4.376 million was spent on training for departmental staff.

(b) Training was delivered on various dates and in various locations throughout Australia. To provide exact details of each training date and location would be an unreasonable diversion of employee resources.

(c) The specific outcomes of each program varied according to the content of the training, however the overarching outcome was to provide staff with learning outcomes relevant to their role, the Department and the broader APS.

Training for employees of the Department is a matter for the Secretary.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Departmental Staff Training
(Question No. 1276)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for departmental staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The time and staff resources required to collect the information cannot be justified as it would require unreasonable diversion of resources.

Attorney-General's Department: Departmental Staff Training
(Question No. 1278)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for departmental staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Keenan: The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The following table outlines the centrally funded training for departmental staff. The total sum spent centrally on training was $415,412.86 (made up of $421,762.86 minus $6350.00 cost recovery for Portfolio Agency attendance at some programs).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Title</th>
<th>Training Cost (GST exclusive)</th>
<th>Training Dates</th>
<th>Training Location</th>
<th>Training outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGD Intensive Leadership Program</td>
<td>$ 58,797.00</td>
<td>17/19/2/2015</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>The program is focussed on developing and inspiring capable leaders to be self-aware, positive, resilient and skilful at navigating the political landscape and people management related complexities. The program also aims to increase the bench strength of the Executive Level 2 cohort as part of the succession planning for SES leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 (6 month program)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12/03/2015, 16/04/2015, 10/06/2015, 10/07/2015, 20/07/2015</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGD Emerging Leaders Program x 2</td>
<td>$ 45,438.27</td>
<td>Cohort 1</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>The Emerging Leaders Program is designed to support high potential Executive Level 1 (EL1) staff as they prepare to transition into senior executive level leadership and management roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohorts</td>
<td></td>
<td>29/10/2014, 05/11/2014, 19/11/2014, 03/12/2014, 28/01/2015, 13/02/2015, 06/03/2015, 25/03/2015, 29/04/2015, 22/05/2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ANZSOG Executive Leadership Program 2015 x 1 participant | $ 18,950.00                  | 1-5 June 2015, 19-23 October 2015 | Sydney, Melbourne | - Specifically designed for managers transitioning into senior executive leadership roles  
- Learning model consisting of two five-day intensive residential modules  
- Experiential and reflective learning approach drawing on real-world situations and experiences  
- Building capacity to address current and future public sector challenges  
- Creating professional networks of practitioners and peers for lifelong learning |
|                                  |                               |                      |                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| APSC EL2 Expansion Program x 3    | $ 15,000.00                  | 26-28/05/2015, 25-26/06/2015, 21/07/2015 | Canberra          | This program aims to support EL2s in giving full expression to their role by developing leadership skills which are critical in progressing complex APS challenges. The program will build upon existing leadership capabilities that are critical to making a full contribution to agency priorities. |
| participants                      |                               |                      |                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| APSC SES Band 3 Leadership Program x 1 | $ 20,190.00                  | 21/11/2014, 8-13/02/2015, 19/06/2015, 20/11/2015 | Canberra, Lake Crackenback | Advice and support of world class leadership facilitators, coaches and highly influential Australian leaders. It will begin with a diagnosis of each role. |

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Title</th>
<th>Training Cost (GST exclusive)</th>
<th>Training Dates</th>
<th>Training Location</th>
<th>Training outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APSC SES Band 1 Leadership Program x 1 participant (6 month program)</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
<td>Various dates from 21/09/2015 to 09/12/2015</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>participant's leadership strengths and areas for growth. It includes a group learning program and a range of optional learning opportunities tailored to participants' individual needs. The SES Band 1 Leadership program provides an opportunity for Band 1 leaders to develop their leadership capability across five key areas; political, strategic, change, people and being. These areas have been identified by the APS as critical to the effective leadership of the APS in a future characterised by uncertainty, complexity, pace and expectation. - equip new SES leaders with the crucial APS-wide knowledge and skills needed to survive as a SES leader—governance, values and ethics, and accountability - build the confidence of new SES leaders to 'step away' from their former role and challenge them to 'step into' their new leadership role - help new SES leaders establish practice that lay the foundation for -being a strong and effective APS leader - building a rewarding and productive SES career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSC SES Orientation Program x 5 participants</td>
<td>$16,000</td>
<td>Various dates</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>Comprehensive reflect on the role of leadership and ethics in a confidential and respectful environment; Consider the values and principles underpinning Australia’s liberal democracy and the practical application of these in a public policy context; Examine the tensions and trade-offs between notions of community, prosperity, liberty, equality and sustainability in decision-making; and Enhance the capability of leaders to exercise informed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranlana Executive/Public Service Colloquiums X 2 participants</td>
<td>$6,800.00</td>
<td>17-22/08/15 10-15/05/15</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Title</th>
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<th>Training Dates</th>
<th>Training Location</th>
<th>Training outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Resilience (1/2 day program)</td>
<td>$4,704.54</td>
<td>18/09/2014, 21/11/2014, 24/06/2015</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>ethical and effective judgement. - define resilience - develop strategies to take personal responsibility - develop personal approaches to build capacity and emotional strength - develop the skills to communicate complex ideas clearly and learn how to write as a member of a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Writing &amp; Correspondence (1 day program)</td>
<td>$15,268.18</td>
<td>28/08/2014, 04/11/2014, 12/05/2015, 26/02/2015, 04/03/2015</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>- explore a variety of skills and techniques to effectively manage client interactions Participants to develop an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' relationship to kinship, land and sea and the how this contributes and benefits contemporary Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Services – pilot (1/2 day program)</td>
<td>$1,803.00</td>
<td>01/07/2014</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>- learn the key elements of teamwork - assess the overall health of your team - identify barriers and develop strategies to overcome them - develop awareness of how you can facilitate team effectiveness - the art of writing selection criteria. hints and tips on how to prepare applications using the AGD Performance Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Program Pilot - Cultural Appreciation training</td>
<td>$4,390.00</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>- identify key challenges associated with individual leadership and supervisory roles in the Department - identify appropriate behaviours to lead motivate, develop and empower team members - identify strategies for influencing stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Title</th>
<th>Training Cost (GST exclusive)</th>
<th>Training Dates</th>
<th>Training Location</th>
<th>Training outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Harnessing Change                    | $ 5,400.00                   | 06/08/2014, 26/05/2015          | Canberra          | - develop a draft career management plan  
- identify change requirements and opportunities  
- develop a change management strategy  
- explore models & tools to help implement that change management strategy  
- lead teams to foster innovative or effective work practices  |
| Managing Time and Workload           | $ 18,850.00                  | 03/07/2014, 04/07/2014, 15/08/2014, 18/11/2014, 24/02/2015, 31/03/2015, 06/05/2015 | Canberra          | - develop techniques for effective time management  
- examine current time management practices  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Title</th>
<th>Training Cost (GST exclusive)</th>
<th>Training Dates</th>
<th>Training Location</th>
<th>Training outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1-day program)</td>
<td></td>
<td>14/04/2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11/06/2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>- structure your presentation to succeed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- refine your presentation delivery style</td>
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<td>- use PowerPoint as a supporting tool for your presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- strategies to create thriving high performance working environment</td>
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<td>- how to leverage the strengths of individual staff members</td>
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<td>- strategies for putting performance management in an everyday context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- techniques to clarify performance expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program for Performance Improvement (PPI) for Managers - update and delivery.</td>
<td>$ 5500.00</td>
<td>12/11/2014</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>- how to recognise the early signs of staff disengagement allowing for early intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1/2 day session)</td>
<td></td>
<td>25/05/2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>- how to engage in a process for having difficult conversations and providing constructive feedback</td>
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<td>- identify strategies for improving performance and re-engaging staff members</td>
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<td>- understand the benefits of ongoing feedback as a critical coaching tool for improving performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- strategies for providing both formal and informal feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Class 1 - Managing Marginal Performance.</td>
<td>$ 3531.23</td>
<td>12/11/2014</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>- how to recognise the early signs of staff disengagement allowing for early intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Class 2 - High Impact Feedback .</td>
<td></td>
<td>25/05/2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>- how to engage in a process for having difficult conversations and providing constructive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2-hour sessions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- identify strategies for improving performance and re-engaging staff members</td>
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<td>- understand the benefits of ongoing feedback as a critical coaching tool for improving performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- strategies for providing both formal and informal feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting it into Practice - AGD Performance Expectations workshops</td>
<td>$ 10,519.32</td>
<td>12/11/2014</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>- how to recognise the early signs of staff disengagement allowing for early intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1/2 day sessions)</td>
<td></td>
<td>25/05/2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>- how to engage in a process for having difficult conversations and providing constructive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11/11/2014</td>
<td></td>
<td>- identify strategies for improving performance and re-engaging staff members</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1 session)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- understand the benefits of ongoing feedback as a critical coaching tool for improving performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21/01/2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>- strategies for providing both formal and informal feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2 sessions)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- assess your current performance, identify areas you would like to further develop and plan for the future by identifying development areas that align</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22/02/2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Title</td>
<td>Training Cost (GST exclusive)</td>
<td>Training Dates</td>
<td>Training Location</td>
<td>Training outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Series of Events:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Canbera</td>
<td>with your longer term goals - information on how you can use the AGD Performance Expectations when considering new roles, applying for a new position or promotion - explore practical strategies for developing effective feedback skills - why upwards feedback is an important tool for personal development - how to develop and effectively provide upwards feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Building a high performing team workshop</td>
<td>$ 8,331.82</td>
<td>17/07/2014</td>
<td>11/03/2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Feedback Fitness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12/03/2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Strengthening Your Conversations</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The Art and Science of Effective Upwards Feedback (2 and 3-hour sessions)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Thinking – pilot (2 x ½ day program)</td>
<td>$ 3,559.09</td>
<td>17 &amp; 27/03/2015</td>
<td>Canbera</td>
<td>- understand what strategic thinking is and why it is important - understand the links between strategic thinking, strategic planning and organisational development - be familiar with a range of tools and techniques for enhancing your strategic thinking as an individual and as part of a team - identify the strategic thinking skills you already have, where you might need to strengthen your skills or develop new ones, and know how to apply and demonstrate your skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Leadership (2-day program)</td>
<td>$ 20,000.00</td>
<td>28-29/07/2014</td>
<td>Canbera</td>
<td>- understand the differences between leadership and management - learn our to build a trusting team culture - identify your own personal leadership challenges - dealing with difficult staff and underperformers - how to have difficult conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>06-07/11/2014</td>
<td></td>
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<td>12-13/03/2015</td>
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<td>18-19/05/2015</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Social Services, in writing on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for departmental staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Porter: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
In 2014-15:
(a) Expenditure on training for departmental staff was $6,534,703 (GST exclusive).
(b) Training was delivered throughout the financial year for staff located in departmental offices in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Darwin, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.
(c) Training activities provided further development in staff capability and skills in priority areas for the workforce.

Department of Human Services: Departmental Staff Training
(Question No. 1283)
Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for departmental staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(a) The Department of Human Services (the department) expended $15,308,477 on external development activities for staff in 2014-15.
(b) These development activities were delivered across the entire 2014-15 financial year and across the department's entire geographical footprint via a variety of methods including face to face, web-based, self-paced, and virtual training.
(c) Training provided to departmental staff covered a broad range of outcomes including:
- Technical training to support customer related transactions;
- Behavioural training to support effective customer interactions;
- Service delivery training to support changes to the way we do business, including moving towards digital channels;
- Leadership training to support new leaders to effectively drive the strategic direction of the department;
- Management training to provide managers with the capability to support staff engagement, productivity and welfare;
- Corporate training to support working within the APS; and
- Core skills training to provide staff with the core transferrable skills such as preparing for and effectively managing change, and transformation.

Department of Industry, Innovation and Science: Departmental Staff Training
(Question No. 1284)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for departmental staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Detail on training for departmental staff is not held centrally. To provide this level of detail would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.

Department of Veterans' Affairs: Minister and Ministerial Staff Domestic and International Travel Costs
(Question No. 1286)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015.
In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for departmental staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(a) Data extracted from our HR and financial systems indicate that $3,860,617 was spent. This amount comprises:
- $1,507,330 of centrally managed training;
- $1,258,544 by specific business areas; and
- $1,094,743 of salary costs of staff participating in training.
(b) Refer to the attached Table A with a summary of centrally managed training, dates and locations.

(c) Outcomes vary for each training program, depending on the individual learning needs of each participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s Why We’re Here</td>
<td>Canberra x 2, Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth</td>
<td>Sept x 2, Oct, Apr, May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidental Counselling</td>
<td>Adelaide, Melbourne, Hobart, Brisbane, Sydney, Perth, Canberra</td>
<td>Dec, Feb x 2, Mar, April x 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SafeTalk</td>
<td>Brisbane x 2, Melbourne x 3, Hobart, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin, Video-conference session, Townsville</td>
<td>Apr x 2, May x 8, June x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>WA/NT/SA and Qld programs (Canberra and Vic/Tas program in progress)</td>
<td>Mar- Nov 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Conversations</td>
<td>Canberra x 3, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide</td>
<td>Nov 2014 – June 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting that Selection Right</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Applications and Interviews</td>
<td>Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne</td>
<td>May, June x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Darwin x 2, Perth x 2, Brisbane x 2</td>
<td>Feb x 4, Mar x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Correspondence</td>
<td>Brisbane x 2, Adelaide, Canberra x 3, Sydney x 2, Melbourne x 2</td>
<td>Oct x 2, Nov x 4, Mar, May x 2, June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing Bullying and Harassment</td>
<td>All locations</td>
<td>July - Dec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIM Basics</td>
<td>All locations except Hobart</td>
<td>Jan-Feb, Apr-June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IntraAgency Network Program (IAN)</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 rounds</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dec 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with Change</td>
<td>Canberra x 5, Darwin, Sydney x 2, Brisbane x 2, Adelaide x 2, Townsville, Melbourne x 4, Perth x 3</td>
<td>Oct, Nov, Dec, Apr, May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and Managing Change</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>Dec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS Ethics and Values</td>
<td>Canberra x 2, Sydney, Hobart</td>
<td>June, Nov, Mar, Apr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structuring Work</td>
<td>Canberra, Perth, Bris</td>
<td>Sept, Dec, May</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Ministerial Staff Training**

(Question No. 1297)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for Ministerial staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Nil.

Attorney-General's Department: Ministerial Staff Training
(Question No. 1301)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for Ministerial staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Keenan: The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(a) The Attorney-General's Department spent $5,345 on ministerial staff training in 2014-15.

(b) (c) The table below provides details of the dates, location and purpose of training undertaken by ministerial staff in 2014-15:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 July 2014</td>
<td>Two ministerial staff attended training on the use of the mobileX diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>resource management tool in advance of the proposed use of the mobileX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 July 2015</td>
<td>One ministerial staff member attended training on the use of the mobileX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>diary resource management tool in advance of the proposed use of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-31 July 2014</td>
<td>mobileX solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>One ministerial adviser attended the biennial Australian Institute of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Studies Conference in family law to assist them in performing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>their role in relation to this area of policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 November 2015</td>
<td>One ministerial adviser attended the Family and Relationship Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>Australia (FRSA) Conference to assist them in performing their role in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relation to this area of policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 March 2015</td>
<td>One ministerial adviser attended an Intellectual Property Law Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>to assist them in performing their role in relation to this area of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 March 2015</td>
<td>Film and Television Law course to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>assist them in performing their role in relation to this area of policy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Department of Communications and the Arts: Ministerial Staff Training
(Question No. 1302)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Arts, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for Ministerial staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Fletcher: The Minister for Arts has provided the answer to the member's question is as follows:

(a) The Attorney-General's Department spent $5,345 on ministerial staff training in 2014-15.

(b) (c) The table below provides details of the dates, location and purpose of training undertaken by ministerial staff in 2014-15:
Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Justice, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for Ministerial staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Keenan: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) Nil.

Department of Human Services: Ministerial Staff Training
(Question No. 1312)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for Ministerial staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) Nil.
(b) N/A.
(c) N/A.

Department of Industry, Innovation and Science: Ministerial Staff Training
(Question No. 1313)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for Ministerial staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) Nil.
(b) Not applicable.
(c) Not applicable.

**Department of Veterans' Affairs: Ministerial Staff Training**
*(Question No. 1315)*

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015.

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for Ministerial staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) Nil
(b) N/A
(c) N/A

**Attorney-General's Department: Departmental Media Events**
*(Question No. 1330)*

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of departmental costs for media events and photo opportunities in 2014-15, what (a) date was each event held, (b) location was each event held at, (c) sum was spent on each event, (d) announcement and/or issue did the event relate to, and (e) was the expenditure for.

Mr Keenan: The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

To attempt to provide the level of detail requested would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources as this information is not centrally recorded.

**Department of Industry, Innovation and Science: Departmental Media Events**
*(Question No. 1336)*

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of departmental costs for media events and photo opportunities in 2014-15, what (a) date was each event held, (b) location was each event held at, (c) sum was spent on each event, (d) announcement and/or issue did the event relate to, and (e) was the expenditure for.

Mr Pyne: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Information on departmental and ministerial media events and photo opportunities is not held centrally. To provide this level of detail would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.

**Department of Veterans' Affairs: Departmental Media Events**
*(Question No. 1338)*

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 17 August 2015.

In respect of departmental costs for media events and photo opportunities in 2014-15, what (a) date was each event held, (b) location was each event held at, (c) sum was spent on each event, (d) announcement and/or issue did the event relate to, and (e) was the expenditure for.

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) does not organise events and photo opportunities specifically for the media. DVA organises and runs events to promote its programmes, policies and activities for stakeholders and clients, to raise awareness and promote access to our services. DVA also organises commemorative events for veterans and the community. The media is welcome to attend these events.

Department of Communications: Departmental Media Events
(Question No. 1339)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of departmental costs for media events and photo opportunities in 2014-15, what (a) date was each event held, (b) location was each event held at, (c) sum was spent on each event, (d) announcement and/or issue did the event relate to, and (e) was the expenditure for.

Mr Fletcher: The Minister for Communications has provided the answer to the member's question is as follows:

From 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, no Departmental media events or photo opportunities were held.

Attorney-General's Department: Ministerial Media Events
(Question No. 1353)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of ministerial costs for media events and photo opportunities in 2014-15, what (a) date was each event held, (b) location was each event held at, (c) sum was spent on each event, (d) announcement and/or issue did the event relate to, and (e) was the expenditure for.

Mr Keenan: The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

To attempt to provide the level of detail requested would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources as this information is not centrally recorded.