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SITTING DAYS—2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 26, 27, 28, 29</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
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<td>July</td>
<td>14, 15, 16, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>26, 27, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 22, 23, 24, 25, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>1, 2, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1026AM</td>
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<td>PERTH</td>
<td>585AM</td>
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<td>SYDNEY</td>
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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

Governor-General
Her Excellency the Hon. Quentin Bryce AC, CVO

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Mr Craig Kelly MP, Hon. Charles Christian Porter MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP,
Mr Brett David Whiteley MP
Leader of the House—Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP

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

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

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

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott, The Hon. Anthony John</td>
<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Albanese, The Hon. Anthony Norman</td>
<td>Grayndler, NSW</td>
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<td>McPherson, QLD</td>
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<td>Dunkley, VIC</td>
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<td>Bird, The Hon. Sharon Leah</td>
<td>Cunningham, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Bishop, The Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen</td>
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<td>Bowen, The Hon. Chris Eyles</td>
<td>McMahon, NSW</td>
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<td>Briggs, The Hon. Jamie Edward</td>
<td>Mayo, SA</td>
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<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
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<td>McMillan, VIC</td>
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<td>Rankin, QLD</td>
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<td>Wakefield, SA</td>
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<td>Gippsland, VIC</td>
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<td>Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie</td>
<td>Bendigo, VIC</td>
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<td>Dawson, QLD</td>
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<td>Melbourne Ports, VIC</td>
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<td>Isaacs, VIC</td>
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<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
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<td>Werriwa, NSW</td>
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<td>Party</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bruce, VIC</td>
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<td>Solomon, NT</td>
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<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Hartsuyker, The Hon. Luke</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
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<td>Hawke, Mr Alexander George</td>
<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
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<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Henderson, Ms Sarah Moya</td>
<td>Corangamite, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Eden-Monaro, NSW</td>
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<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Hogan, Mr Kevin John</td>
<td>Page, NSW</td>
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<td>Petrie, QLD</td>
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<td>Flinders, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Lyons, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Swan, WA</td>
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<td>Jensen, Dr Dennis Geoffrey</td>
<td>Tangney, WA</td>
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<td>Herbert, QLD</td>
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<td>Throsby, NSW</td>
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<td>Kennedy, QLD</td>
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<td>Keenan, The Hon. Michael</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
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<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
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<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
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<td>Bowman, QLD</td>
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<td>Capricornia, QLD</td>
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<td>Fraser, ACT</td>
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<td>Groom, QLD</td>
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<td>Riverina, NSW</td>
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<td>Cook, NSW</td>
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<td>Bass, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>O'Connor, The Hon. Brendan Patrick John</td>
<td>Gorton, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Flynn, QLD</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Higgins, VIC</td>
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<td>Hotham, VIC</td>
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<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
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<td>Palmer, Mr Clive Frederick</td>
<td>Fairfax QLD</td>
<td>PUP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parke, The Hon. Melissa</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pasin, Mr Antony</td>
<td>Barker, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Pitt, Mr Keith John</td>
<td>Hinkler, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Plibersek, The Hon. Tanya Joan</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Porter, The Hon. Charles Christian</td>
<td>Pearce, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Ryan, QLD</td>
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<td>Price, Ms Melissa Lee</td>
<td>Durack, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Canning, WA</td>
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<td>Ripoll, The Hon. Bernard Fernando</td>
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<td>Kingston, SA</td>
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<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Casey, VIC</td>
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<td>LP</td>
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<td>Stone, The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy</td>
<td>Murray, VIC</td>
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<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
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<td>Deakin, VIC</td>
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<td>Varvaris, Mr Nickolas</td>
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<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
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<td>Watts, Mr Timothy Graham</td>
<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
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<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
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<td>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien</td>
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<td>IND.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Williams, Mr Matthew</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
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<td>LP</td>
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<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
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</tr>
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<td>LP</td>
</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—Katters Australia Party; AG—Australian Greens; PUP—Palmer United Party

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
## ABBOTT MINISTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Brett Mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Justice</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bob Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Scott Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bob Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Human Services</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Sport</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. David Johnston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</em></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Environment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Shadow Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Small Business</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</td>
<td></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</td>
<td>Gai Brodtmann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</td>
<td>Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Infrastructure</td>
<td>Stephen Jones MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for External Territories</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Hon Ed Husic MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Vocational Education</td>
<td>Hon Sharon Bird MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Tony Zappia MP</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
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<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
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<td>Title</td>
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<td>Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Justice</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Lisa Singh</td>
</tr>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Education</td>
<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Resources</td>
<td>Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Northern Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health</td>
<td>Hon Catherine King MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Hon Melissa Parke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health</td>
<td>Hon Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disability Reform</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Doug Cameron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Carers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Senator Carol Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Shayne Neumann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Aged Care</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
<td>Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Services</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS

MONDAY, 3 MARCH 2014

Chamber
PETITIONS
  DNA Testing ........................................................................................................... 1253
  Rifle Company Butterworth .................................................................................... 1253
  Soliris ....................................................................................................................... 1254
  Joseph, Father Francis ............................................................................................. 1254
PETITIONS
  Responses .................................................................................................................. 1254
  Dampier Archipelago—World Heritage ................................................................. 1254
PETITIONS
  Statements ............................................................................................................... 1255
COMMITTEES
  Economics Committee
    Report ..................................................................................................................... 1256
    Reference to Federation Chamber ........................................................................ 1259
PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS
  South Australia: Economy ...................................................................................... 1259
  Human Rights: North Korea .................................................................................. 1267
  Programme for International Student Assessment ............................................. 1275
BILLS
  Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014 ................................................................. 1284
  Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014 ................................................................. 1284
  Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014 —
    Second Reading .................................................................................................... 1284
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS
  Atypical Haemolytic Uraemia Syndrome .......................................................... 1305
  Petition: Magnetic Resonance Imaging Licence for Mount Gambier .................. 1306
  Kingsford Smith Electorate: First Hand Aboriginal Sunday Markets ............... 1306
  Heazlewood, Mr Ivan ............................................................................................. 1307
  Iramoo Primary School ......................................................................................... 1307
  Bowman Electorate: BoysTown ............................................................................ 1308
  Killesteyn, Mr Ed .................................................................................................. 1308
  Cure, Ms Amy ....................................................................................................... 1309
  Parramatta Electorate: Evocca College .................................................................. 1309
  Ryan Electorate: Community Service Awards .................................................. 1309
  Canberra ............................................................................................................... 1310
  Banks Electorate: Local Sporting Champions Grants ........................................ 1310
  Cooper, Mr Chris ................................................................................................... 1311
  Country Women's Association ........................................................................... 1311
  Amanda Young Foundation .................................................................................. 1312
  Workplace Relations .......................................................................................... 1312
CONTENTS—continued

Environment .................................................................................................................. 1313
Canberra ...................................................................................................................... 1313
Payne, Mr Harold Stanley (Stan) .................................................................................. 1314

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
Ukraine ......................................................................................................................... 1314
Aviation ......................................................................................................................... 1315
Qantas ............................................................................................................................. 1315
Ukraine ......................................................................................................................... 1316
Qantas ............................................................................................................................. 1317
Qantas ............................................................................................................................. 1319
Qantas ............................................................................................................................. 1319
Asylum Seekers ........................................................................................................... 1320
Aviation Industry ......................................................................................................... 1321
Qantas ............................................................................................................................. 1322
Carbon Pricing ............................................................................................................ 1323

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS .................................................................................. 1324

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
Qantas ............................................................................................................................. 1324
Carbon Pricing ............................................................................................................. 1324
Qantas ............................................................................................................................. 1325
Budget ............................................................................................................................ 1326
Qantas ............................................................................................................................. 1326
Building and Construction Industry ............................................................................. 1327
Business Investment ..................................................................................................... 1328
Trade .............................................................................................................................. 1328
Business Investment ..................................................................................................... 1329
Asylum Seekers ........................................................................................................... 1330
Economy ........................................................................................................................ 1331
Broadband ...................................................................................................................... 1332

DOCUMENTS—
Presentation ................................................................................................................... 1333

MOTIONS—
National Archives of Australia Advisory Council ....................................................... 1333
PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS................................................................................. 1333

BUSINESS—
Rearrangement ............................................................................................................... 1334

GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH—
Address-in-Reply .......................................................................................................... 1334

BILLS—
Australian Research Council Amendment Bill 2013—
Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment Bill 2013—
Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Consumer Protection) Bill 2013—
Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2013 Measures No. 1) Bill 2013—
Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2013—
Assent .............................................................................................................................. 1373
CONTENTS—continued

Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014 .............................................. 1374
Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014 .............................................. 1374
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014 .......... 1374

SECOND READING

ADJOURNMENT—

Family Law ......................................................................................... 1418
Werriwa Electorate: Macdermott, Sister Kerry .................................. 1419
Address-in-Reply ................................................................................ 1420
Financial Advice Reforms ................................................................. 1422
Mobile Phone Services ....................................................................... 1423
Auditory Processing Disorder ............................................................. 1424

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS—

Charlton Electorate: West Wallsend High School ................................ 1426
Murphy, Ms Allison ............................................................................ 1426
Blair Electorate: Aunty Narella Simpson ............................................ 1428
Prostate Cancer.................................................................................. 1428
Sculin Electorate: Broadband ............................................................... 1429
Sport ................................................................................................. 1430
Macarthur Electorate: Inter Dominion Championship ....................... 1432
Corio Electorate: Health Services ....................................................... 1433
Riverina Electorate: Tumbatrek ........................................................... 1434

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS—

Infrastructure .................................................................................... 1435
Small Business .................................................................................. 1443
Cambodia .......................................................................................... 1451
Coeliac Awareness Week ..................................................................... 1462
Rare Disease Day ................................................................................ 1468

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—

Cypriot Wine Festival ......................................................................... 1471
McPherson Electorate: Robina Lions Club ......................................... 1471
Shortland Electorate: Australia Day Awards ....................................... 1472
Slattery, Mr Laurie .............................................................................. 1472
Lalor Electorate: Cambridge Primary School ..................................... 1473
Murray Electorate: Boosey Creek Cheese .......................................... 1473
Bendigo Electorate: Women’s National Basket Ball League .............. 1474
Water ................................................................................................. 1474
Dimech, Mr Lawrence ........................................................................ 1474
Schools .............................................................................................. 1475
Blair Electorate: Ipswich Headspace .................................................. 1475
Forde Electorate: Beenleigh Family Centre Child Care ....................... 1476
Hotham Electorate: Lunar New Year Festival in Springvale ................ 1476
Charitable Organisations .................................................................... 1477
Australian Defence Force ................................................................... 1477
CONTENTS—continued

Deakin Electorate: Infrastructure ................................................................. 1478
Fraser Electorate: Youth Connections Program ........................................... 1478
Hinkler Electorate ......................................................................................... 1479
Medicare ......................................................................................................... 1479
Flynn Electorate ......................................................................................... 1480
Fremantle Electorate: Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp .......... 1480
Tangney Electorate: Outstanding Residents .................................................. 1481
Charlton Electorate: Alesco Senior College ................................................ 1481
Capricornia Electorate: Jason Rich Foundation ......................................... 1482
Isaacs Electorate: Open Water Swims ......................................................... 1482
Reid Electorate: Turkish Community ............................................................ 1482
United Voice .................................................................................................. 1483
Spastic Centres of South Australia ............................................................... 1483
Victorian State Election ............................................................................... 1484
Agriculture ....................................................................................................... 1484
GRIEVANCE DEBATE—
Foreign Aid ..................................................................................................... 1485
Mobile Phone Towers .................................................................................... 1488
Gilmore Electorate: Employment ................................................................ 1489
Sydney Airport ............................................................................................... 1492
Human Rights: Burma, Uganda and the Middle East .................................. 1494
Doctor Shortage in Rural and Regional Australia ......................................... 1497
The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgment of country and read prayers.

PETITIONS

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

DNA Testing

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
This Petition of Certain Citizens of Australia
Draws To the Attention of the House our Proposed Paternity Law
We therefore ask the House to consider the Introduction of this Law to the citizens of Australia
Proposed Paternity Law
- When DNA tests prove he is not the paternal father of his children (over 18 years of age), then a court decides if DNA testing is warranted [with alleged father] to determine the paternity of the said child
- Such Judgement to be made in an appropriate Court
- DNA costs to be borne by the Husband/Partner
- Medical treatment is facilitated when paternal parents' genes [cancer/MS] can be identified
- Children often choose to have their Birth Certificate altered to reflect their true parentage
- Payment of child support should always be the responsibility of the paternal father
- Court-approved DNA testing can ensure the validity of specimens taken, then transported and analysed by an approved facility
- A half-sister having children to her half-brother may result in "Recessive Gene Syndrome" problems for an innocent child. This new Law will reduce such tragedy
- EVERY CHILD HAS THE BASIC MORAL AND HUMAN "RIGHT"—TO KNOW THEIR TRUE PATERNITY.
This issue can be solved by using above Paternity Law!
from 2 citizens

Rifle Company Butterworth

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
This petition of ex members of Rifle Company Butterworth draws to the attention of the House:
- That approximately 9000 members of Rifle Company Butterworth, Malaysia (RCB) of the Australian Army, 1970-1989, in the period of the Second Malaysian Emergency, have been consistently denied the appropriate level of medallic recognition and veteran entitlements by Defence. These troops were deployed to provide a Protective and Quick Reaction Force, but this was veiled as training operations for political and intelligence reasons;
- We therefore request the House to recommend a review be undertaken to enable reclassification of service by the RCB 1970-1989 from peacetime to warlike and grant qualifying service for VEA
entitlements and medallion recognition and have those serving in RCB at Butterworth Air Base declared under the Defence Act as an active service area.

- We contend that Defence in assessing our claims has not applied consistent standards, been misleading with its facts, not considering key data provided, denying natural justice, rewriting history in retrospect and basing their decisions on budgetary constraints, rather than recognition of service at the appropriate level.

from 2,193 citizens

Soliris

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

This petition of concerned Australians calls on the House of Representatives to support Government funding for Soliris through the Life Saving Drugs Program (LSDP) for patients living with ‘aHUS’ — an ultra-rare, life-threatening, genetic disease.

from 5 citizens

Joseph, Father Francis

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

We the undersigned citizens of Australia are deeply concerned about the fate of the "disappeared" Catholic priest Father Francis Joseph in Sri Lanka.

We therefore ask the house to initiate inquiries from the Sri Lanka Government's security agencies regarding the well being of Father Francis Joseph.

from 11 citizens

Petitions received.

PETITIONS

Responses

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:02): The following ministerial response to a petition has been received:

Dampier Archipelago—World Heritage

Dear Dr Jensen

I refer to your letter of 2 January 2014 with reference to a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding possible World Heritage Listing of the Dampier Archipelago.

The petition asks the House of Representatives to (i) pay heed to the final report of the Australian Heritage Council re the Burrup April 2012, and (ii) encourage the State of Western Australia to nominate the Burrup area for World Heritage listing.

As the petitioners observe, responsibility to prepare a World Heritage nomination of the Dampier Archipelago lies with the Western Australian Government.

The high national importance of the Dampier Archipelago (including the Burrup Peninsula) is recognised by its inclusion on the National Heritage List in 2007. The listed national heritage values of this place are protected as matters of national environmental significance under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

In May 2012 the Australian Heritage Council published its assessment that the Dampier Archipelago (including the Burrup Peninsula) place is likely to meet the threshold of Outstanding Universal Value against one or more World Heritage criteria. The Council considered that further information and research with traditional owners would be required to clarify the potential for the place to meet World
Heritage criteria pertaining to living cultural tradition. The Council recommended that a study be undertaken to explore these values for possible addition to the current listed national heritage values and potentially also for consideration for a future World Heritage nomination. The timing of this study must accord with the priorities of the relevant Aboriginal community.

Effective management of the heritage place would be required before any World Heritage nomination could proceed. Officers from the Department of the Environment are continuing to work with the Western Australian Government and industry parties to develop stronger management arrangements to protect and conserve the heritage values of the national heritage place. In addition, significant funds are allocated under Conservation Agreements with industry partners for projects to deliver net benefits to protect and conserve the national heritage values of the place.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

from the Minister for the Environment, Mr Hunt

PETITIONS

Statements

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:02): Last week, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Petitions, I outlined the role of the committee and summarised the threshold requirements that petitions must meet before they are presented in the House and then referred to a minister. Today, I will outline the process for referring petitions to ministers and receiving their responses.

Once a petition that the committee has found complies with standing orders has been presented, either by me as the chair or by a member, standing orders enable the committee to refer the petition to the 'minister responsible for the administration of the matter raised in the petition'. The minister is expected to lodge a written response with the committee within 90 days. Ministerial responses are then considered by the committee and presented by me during this timeslot for petitions allocated by the House; provided to the principal petitioner; printed in Hansard; and then made available on the committee's page on the Parliament House website. So the House's process for petitions is airing not only the issues raised by the petitioner. The government's response to those issues is also made public by the committee.

Before the Petitions Committee was established, the practice was for the House to be informed of the subject matter of each petition and the number of signatures, either by an announcement by the Clerk on sittings Mondays or by a member during members' statements. Petitions were then forwarded to the relevant minister, but it was unusual for responses to be made. For example, there were only 15 tabled responses to petitions between 1973 and 2007.

As you know, Madam Speaker, the tradition of people petitioning the parliament is a very old one. One of the principles underlying the improved petitioning arrangements that began in 2008 is that governments should respond to petitions. Strengthening the ministerial response process has helped people to see the value of engaging with the House through petitions. Petitioners see that their issue is being raised directly in the House and can usually expect to receive a response from the relevant minister on the matter raised. So it seems fair to say that the tradition has been brought up to date, at least to some degree, and information of interest to many Australians is made public.

While for petitioners the ideal would be have their concerns addressed and neatly resolved by ministerial response, in a well-functioning democracy this is likely to be relatively rare. If substantial changes are to be made to government programs, for example, formulating
government policy and administrative process can take months of consideration before being implemented or found not to be viable. Further, if legislative changes are required, these will have to go through the robust parliamentary process, which also takes considerable time.

Most petitioners understand this. What is especially valuable about the ministerial response process is that there is a formal acknowledgement that the minister has considered their concerns and outlined why a circumstance may exist and why the government acts, or does not act, in a certain way.

On some occasions, though, a matter is resolved to the satisfaction of petitioners. An example is a petition last year requesting that a certain medication for the treatment of metastatic melanoma be added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, or the PBS. In the response, the Minister for Health acknowledged the seriousness and high incidence of skin cancer in Australia and advised that the government had approved the listing of the medication on the PBS. We cannot know what role the petition played, but we do know that concern about a serious issue was drawn to the attention of the House, and the government's response to that issue was made public by a committee of the House.

While the Petitions Committee does not have the power to pursue ministerial responses, the current arrangements have led to a significant increase in response to petitions, from 0.3 per cent in the 41st Parliament, under the previous system, to 58 and 67 per cent in the 42nd and 43rd parliaments. These figures indicate the number of response letters presented, although one letter might be a response to multiple petitions. If this is taken into account, the real response rate for the 43rd Parliament would be closer to 90 per cent. I would argue that this illustrates that both petitioners and ministers see the value in the petitioning system as a way to engage more directly on issues. The Petitions Committee is pleased to be able to facilitate that engagement on behalf of the House.

COMMITTEES
Economics Committee
Report

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (10:08): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economics, I present the committee's report entitled Review of the Reserve Bank of Australia annual report 2013 (first report), together with minutes of the proceedings.

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

Ms O'DWYER: I now wish to make a statement in relation to that report. I am very pleased to be presenting the first report of the economics committee for the 44th Parliament. The committee holds two public hearings each year with the Governor of the Reserve Bank, and this report follows the first of these hearings for the new committee, on 18 December 2013, following the federal election.

The RBA noted in its November 2013 Statement on monetary policy that 'the prospect of a pick-up in conditions in many advanced economies is likely to see growth for the world as a whole improve from a below-average pace in 2013 to around average in 2014'. The RBA also forecast 'a little above average' growth in Australia's major trading partners in 2014.
Australian growth was two to three per cent of GDP in 2013 and the RBA assessment is that inflation will remain consistent with the medium-term target over the next one to two years.

The economies in China, the United States, Japan and Europe are all showing signs of recovery. The governor commented that global financial conditions remain very accommodative, market volatility has abated, and there is ample funding available for creditworthy borrowers.

Despite these initial signs of recovery in developed economies, there is still a lot of work required to avoid further economic instability.

The recent G20 meeting in Sydney has brokered a hugely significant accord to increase global growth by two per cent above the current trajectory over the next five years. Australia has an important role in helping to realise this goal by implementing policies that will achieve workplace reform and boost productivity.

At its December and February meetings, the RBA board judged that it was prudent to hold the cash rate steady at 2½ per cent given the substantial degree of policy stimulus that had been imparted and evidence of its effects. The board indicated in its February statement that market pricing suggests no change to the cash rate is expected for about a year.

In his statement on the board's decision, the governor stated that monetary policy is appropriately configured to foster sustainable growth in demand and inflation outcomes consistent with the target. The governor's view is that the most prudent course in this regard is likely to be a period of stability in interest rates.

The exchange rate has been a significant source of economic uncertainty and the Australian dollar has appreciated significantly over the past decade.

The governor commented that a lower rate is likely to be needed for balanced growth, which would also likely see a sooner than forecast growth increase with some upward pressure on inflation. The governor does not favour intervention in the exchange rate at this stage.

The RBA welcomed the one-off $8.8 billion grant to the Reserve Bank Reserve Fund which will be made by the government before the end of the financial year. The MYEFO states that this grant will ensure that the RBA is adequately resourced to conduct foreign exchange and monetary policy operations. The governor stated that this one-off injection of funds will be important in bringing the fund up to 15 per cent of the bank's assets at risk, the level sought by the RBA, on as early a schedule as possible.

Australia is transitioning to a post-mining-boom era with both the MYEFO and the RBA forecasting declining investment in the resources sector. This may create opportunities to invest in other sectors of the economy, including infrastructure. Such investments will be needed to realise productivity gains and future growth, but the decision making in this regard must be sound. I again note that Australia played a very leading role in hosting the G20 last week, as well as the business working group that is focused on how we can get more productivity-enhancing infrastructure not only in Australia but in those countries that are part of the G20.

Finally, on behalf of the committee I would like to thank the Governor of the Reserve Bank, Mr Glenn Stevens, and other representatives of the RBA for appearing at the hearing.
on 18 December 2013. The committee looks forward to its next hearing with the governor this coming Friday in Sydney.

I commend the report to the House.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (10:13): On behalf of the opposition I am pleased to speak to the review of the Reserve Bank of Australia annual report 2013. I thank the chair of the committee and also acknowledge the presence in the chamber of my colleagues the member for Rankin and the member for Charlton. I echo the sentiments of the chair in expressing gratitude for the time and assistance of the RBA governor and his senior executives who appeared before the committee in December. I also express appreciation for the great work of the committee secretariat.

While the world has managed to avoid the type of collapse feared in the aftermath of the worst economic conditions in nearly eight decades, many countries are still dogged by lower than average growth, stubborn unemployment and, in some cases, having had to cope with double-dip recessions. Since our prosperity can be affected by the health of our trading partners, the RBA's assessment of global economic strength is crucial. Looking to the world stage, the RBA noted in December that there were positive signs emerging from Europe, the US and China. But the tide of perception has started to shift, even since then. In Europe, for instance, anxiety about the future of the European financial system has been replaced by concerns, expressed via the IMF in January, about the signs of potential deflation. In the US, relief surrounding tapering has been muted by concerns—as expressed by new Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen—about soft data appearing over the last six weeks pointing to less favourable numbers on jobs, housing, retail sales and industrial production. In China the economy has defied predictions of contraction, but minds are directed towards a continued growth of its shadow banking system and its possible impact within and beyond China.

In the Australian context, we need to be exceptionally mindful of this—especially considering the RBA take on lower-than-trend growth. While keeping an eye on the soft world economy, we should be concerned about the possible impact on our own economy of confused and contradictory decision making. It is taking a long time for this government to respond in an adult way to the reality plaguing governments the world over—subdued economic conditions, sporadic job growth and revenue refusing to lift in the way it did. In many cases it appears that this government's actions could weaken our economy at a time when the world economy remains weak. We have seen a government unable to respond to job shedding occurring under its watch at the rate of one job every three minutes since its election. Retailers now express concerns about the impact of this on discretionary spending at a time when the RBA has observed subdued growth in private domestic demand.

We have seen a government send conflicting signals about fiscal strategy, contemplating contractionary expenditure cuts while planning to levy business to fund an excessive Paid Parental Leave scheme. We have seen a government block access to crucial foreign investment for firms like GrainCorp while seemingly chasing out of the country firms like Holden, but then seeking foreign capital for Qantas. We have also seen the government not only refuse to consider co-investment in firms that are helping boost economic activity in regional Australia, but then pressure these firms to aggressively cut wages and undermine purchasing power of families within those regions. Disturbingly, the RBA governor warned in December that it was:
... difficult to predict the timing and strength of the expected upturn in non-mining investment. But in the last week we have seen new figures pointing to a sharp contraction in non-mining business investment at a time when it is needed to offset the anticipated slide in mining sector investment.

On top of this, while repeatedly trying to condition the broader public about expenditure cuts, this government's other spending decisions have been extraordinary, most notably its decision to grant the RBA close to $9 billion in government support, as referred to in this report. Although seeking to suggest the RBA was pushing for the grant, it was obvious from our hearings that the Treasurer himself had not only decided the grant should be paid but it was he and he alone that determined that the $8.8 billion in scarce funds should be paid in one lump sum. And while in claiming this money was urgently needed, the Treasurer avoided mentioning that the funds would not be paid immediately but sometime in first half of 2014 and that the RBA would actually be in a position to provide a dividend to the government in the second half of 2014. Most importantly, what is clear is that this money was not necessarily needed to shore up the RBA but that it was used to score political points by the Treasurer made at the expense of families or communities. You only have to scroll through the cuts contained in MYEFO and this becomes painfully clear. I commend the report to the House, but flag the opposition's concern about the excessively generous and ill-considered decision of the Treasurer to replenish the Reserve Bank Reserve Fund in the way that he determined.

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

Ms O’DWYER (Higgins) (10:18): I move:
That the House take note of the report.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 39(c), the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting. Does the honourable member for Higgins wish to move a motion to refer the matter to the Federation Chamber?

Reference to Federation Chamber

Ms O’DWYER (Higgins) (10:18): by leave—I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

South Australia: Economy

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (10:18): I move the motion relating to the South Australian economy in the terms in which it appears on the Notice Paper:

That this House notes:
(1) with concern that unemployment in South Australia is higher than the national average;
(2) that South Australia has a talented workforce that deserves a government determined to:
   (a) reduce taxes and regulation;
   (b) grow the state’s economy, and
   (c) liberate the people of South Australia to realise their destiny; and
(3) that the Australian Government has a plan to build a stronger South Australian economy so that everyone can get ahead through abolishing the carbon tax, ending the waste, stopping the boats, and building the roads of the 21st century.

South Australia is my home. I have spent most of my life in South Australia and I am passionate about my state. Colonel William Light and the new settlers built the framework for a wonderful city surrounded by some of the best parklands and gardens. Everything about South Australia had a plan and a purpose. But not now.

In the postwar period South Australia, like pretty much all of Australia, was privileged to have a large influx of migrants—the '£10 Poms', the Greeks, the Italians and others from all over the globe. They came to South Australia to make a new start to escape the ravages of war-torn Europe. They came to our shores to live in an exciting new world that Tom Playford and others were creating. Former Liberal Premier of South Australia Tom Playford had a plan to invest in infrastructure, just as our current Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, has.

Up until the early 1980s, South Australia was larger than Western Australia as an economy. Adelaide was a thriving city that continued to be the home to many creative talents and commerce. We had many and several companies in the ASX 100 that had headquarters in South Australia, but now there are two. So what is the state Labor government doing, or what has it done, to fix the exodus of the South Australian companies or their failure to grow as quickly as other companies around Australia? It has decided that the best thing it can do is to give the businesses in South Australia the highest-taxing jurisdiction in the nation. I see no jobs plan in that.

South Australia needs and deserves a better government, a government that will reduce taxes. We are the highest-taxed state, and the state Labor government has been addicted to payroll tax, levies, the car park tax and high work cover. Just on the weekend, the members opposite would have seen in The Advertiser the Australian Industry Group, which looks after the manufacturing sector, say that the cost of doing business in South Australia is a significant issue. It wants to have a lower payroll tax and lower WorkCover levies.

Not surprisingly, since Labor got into power 12 years ago, manufacturing has declined and taxes have increased. There is a direct correlation there, and the members opposite know it. And they know that business creates jobs.

This is something that the state Liberal leader, Steven Marshall, has a great appreciation of, having worked in many businesses in South Australia. He knows how important it is to create an entrepreneurial culture and have a greater focus on exports. Steven Marshall has the drive and the energy to give South Australia a better future. State Liberals will reduce payroll tax. They will remove the car park tax and give businesses a better chance of employing people: more jobs and more incomes for families.

But the state Labor government has no ideas on how to tackle jobs and the jobs crisis engulfing South Australia. Over the last eight months, 25,000 full-time jobs have been lost. South Australia has the highest jobless rate in mainland Australia and the highest unemployment for 12 years. The only thing that Weatherill can do is control debt—or not control debt. And we have record levels of debt: debt, debt and more debt. The Premier and part-time Treasurer, Jay Weatherill, like the member for Lilley and the member for McMahon, has never delivered a surplus. It is just spend, spend, spend. It is the South Australian children who will have to cover the future payments on interest, the $2 million
every single day that is going out of our economy—$2 million that could be spent on social infrastructure like schools, education and community projects. At a federal level, $10 billion a year could go to the same causes.

But Labor never consider this in the equation. They just like to spend, increase the interest repayments and get into more debt and more interest repayments. In South Australia, $2 million a day can go a long way to providing infrastructure. I thank the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, who is here, for joining the debate. He knows how important infrastructure is in South Australia to help our growing sectors of mining, resources and agriculture.

South Australia has had some great innovative companies over the years. It has had electronics companies at the high end, like Redarc and Codan, and food companies like San Remo pasta, Haigh’s and Robern Menz. In the high-end section of creative industries we have Rising Sun Pictures, which does visual effects for Hollywood blockbusters. Philmac, in my electorate, is a leader in pipe fittings for the irrigation sector; and there is ASC, one of the largest defence projects in Australia, with the AWDs.

South Australians are a patriotic people and rallied behind Spring Gully when their business was threatened last year. This is a great example of how the power of the consumer can have a real, positive impact on a product. This is the message that I have been encouraging government, industry and residents in my electorate to keep in mind, and some people in the media in South Australia have got behind it as well. Leon Byner on FIVEaa, and The Advertiser, have been very active in promoting the benefits of supporting our local produce. But there are not enough companies and not enough employees, and many of our talented workforce have gone either interstate or overseas—30,000 during Labor’s reign; a 30,000-person brain drain; 30,000 talented people interstate.

It is also the senior management of our larger corporates who are moving interstate: Hill’s Holdings, Harris Scarfe and Adelaide Brighton. Our small business sector, which the member for Makin acknowledged when he spoke last week, was ignored—yes, it was ignored; ignored by the state Labor government and the federal Labor government. There were higher taxes and tougher conditions in doing business. This is what people said to me before the election, that they were facing some of the toughest conditions ever and that Labor and their taxes were not helping. People knew that, and the member for Makin knows that.

South Australia can recover; we need a change of government to give our economic future the best chance. Many regions, both locally and overseas—whether that be in the UK with the closure of coalmines or Germany in the Ruhr area—have faced similar challenges over many years. Newcastle and the Hunter Valley in New South faced a similar situation when the BHP steelworks closed in 1999, with more than 5,000 manufacturing jobs lost. In the 1990s their unemployment was above 10 per cent and reached 16 per cent at one stage.

But what did they do? They diversified their economy. They went into services and they looked at other areas. Like Adelaide, Newcastle has benefited from large defence contracts—most recently the Air Warfare Destroyer Program. This was announced in 2004 by the Howard Liberal government, the total value being over $8 billion. ASC Shipbuilding at Osborne was awarded the tender, and has Adelaide as its headquarters. It lists more than 25,000 people with the AWD alliance as part of that exciting project: high-end engineers and high-end manufacturing—a future for South Australia.
But now, our defence industry enters the potential 'valley of death' scenario. Why? Because the Howard government's commitment to AWDs was the last real investment decision made in shipbuilding by an Australian government. Labor talked the big talk, and Kevin Rudd committed to building submarines prior to the 2007 election. But six years later there have been no contracts and no definite plans. We are working as quickly as possible to rectify these problems from Labor's inaction, and to give certainty to South Australia's defence companies.

The coalition government has a plan to build a stronger economy, the new infrastructure that Jamie Briggs is working so hard to deliver: the North-South Corridor and $500 million committed for Darlington. I have been talking regularly to my federal colleagues about fast tracking the Torrens-to-Torrens project. Our commitments are part of billions of dollars nationally. We are reducing $1 billion in regulatory costs; the freighters, the industry groups, the resources and Business SA have all spoken to me about cutting red tape. I note in today's Advertiser that Liberal leader Steven Marshall committed to reducing red tape, saving $100 million a year. Another area in which we are helping small businesses—not ignoring them, helping them.

We are removing taxes, like the carbon tax and the mining tax, and I just want to touch on the minerals resource rent tax. It applies to iron ore, something that the Premier, Jay Weatherill, does not acknowledge. There are currently three operational iron ore mines in South Australia, with a further three approved under construction and 11 developing projects. The mining tax is not good for South Australia, and Weatherill needs to stand up to his Labor mates in Canberra and tell them to adhere to the wishes of the people at the last election and get rid of the mining tax.

The mining tax is a $1 billion hit on manufacturing. The carbon tax is a $4 billion hit on electricity. As stated by the South Australian Chamber of Mining and Energy last year:

SACOME welcomes the introduction of legislation to repeal the Minerals Resource Rent Tax (MRRT), in line with the Liberal party's election commitment to abolish the damaging tax.

They go on to say:
The MRRT is an unfair tax, and discriminates against South Australia in particular due to our vast amounts of magnetite iron ore, …

The Premier just conveniently missed this. (Time expired)

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

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

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (10:29): I am not at all surprised that this motion has come before the House two weeks before the South Australian state election, because the South Australian Liberal opposition leader needs all the help he can get and the members here in the federal parliament are trying to do just that. Can I say in respect of the member for Hindmarsh's address that he has just presented to the House that it is full of political rhetoric and full of bland statements and aspirations but very light on facts.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to this motion, because I am happy to bring some facts to this debate. During Labor's first decade in office, between 2002 and 2010-11, the South Australian economy grew by 22.4 per cent. It did so at a time of great difficulty and it did so because we had a state Labor government that was focused on the state and focused on the things that were going to improve productivity in South Australia—and the things that it
invested in are doing exactly that. I refer to things like the new medical health and research centre that was opened only last month, a magnificent facility that will not only create jobs but will be the focus of medical research not just for Australia but for many parts of the world, something that we can indeed be proud of. The new Royal Adelaide Hospital, which is currently underway, is also a sign of a government that is looking to the future, not the past, because the South Australian government understands the importance of a good health system to the everyday lives of the people of South Australia. More importantly, it is also about efficiencies, because if you operate from an old, tired and run-down facility, the medical costs to the consumers and to the state are much higher than if you have a better facility.

The extensions to the convention centre are already underway. I spoke to the manager of the convention centre in recent weeks, and the centre is booked out for months and months in advance. It is very important to bringing people to South Australia. The South Australian Labor government totally understands that, and that is why it is investing in expanding the facility to accommodate the growing demands for the use of it. We have seen the Adelaide Oval redeveloped. Again, not only will that bring more people into South Australia but it becomes an asset and a showpiece for local and international sporting events. It enables the South Australian government to boost the economic activity of the state, because it can attract international events, which you could not otherwise do.

I heard the member for Hindmarsh talking about South Road. It was the state Labor government that put on the agenda the improvements of the South Road from the Torrens Road to the River Torrens, opposed by those in this place and opposed by the Liberals in South Australia. They would have preferred to spend the money down south at Darlington, which they think it is more important, against the advice of the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure in South Australia. The people who know best have advised that the money should have been spent in the Torrens Road to River Torrens area, but, no, these folks knew better. What they knew better was where to spend money to hold seats that they were desperately in need of holding at the last federal election.

The state Labor government has also invested in the Northern Expressway and the new Superway, at the northern end of South Road—new roadworks which will improve productivity because they will save transport times. It is about having in place a government that understands what is needed if you want to improve efficiencies and productivity, enabling industries to operate much more viably and not only attracting new industries but keeping the ones that you have.

I want to talk a little bit about the issue of jobs. Just after the September election, Minister for Industry MacFarlane came out to visit GM Holden, because there was the discussion about its future. The member for Hindmarsh willingly came out, visited the plant, put on his fluoro vest and walked through the plant as though he was there to save Holden, along with Minister MacFarlane. What happened immediately after that visit? The Abbott government decided that it would turn its back on Holden. It did so by not only cutting $500 million of funding from the auto industry but also by saying to GMH and car makers in this country, 'There will be no further funding beyond 2017, and we're not going to make any decisions; we're going to handball the issue on to the Productivity Commission.' When they did that, where was the member for Hindmarsh? He became invisible. The fluoro vests suddenly disappeared. At least
the member for Murray had the decency to come in and stand up for her community and her electorate.

The member for Hindmarsh went missing. He was happy to be seen when the cameras were there, but he was not prepared to stand up for GMH workers when the decisions were made. And he talks about jobs, yet the jobs that will be lost to South Australia as a result GMH not continuing in South Australia beyond 2017 will run into the thousands. There will be several hundred small businesses and their employees who will also be affected—because their futures and their livelihoods, depend on GMH. Nobody knows that better than the member for Wakefield—who is going to speak in a moment—and myself. We have been part of that community for decades. And can I say to the member for Hindmarsh: in terms of the unemployment figures, the northern parts of Adelaide needed GMH to continue if they were going to increase and sustain employment down there.

This does not stop with GMH. Before the election, members of the Liberal Party happily wore, ‘I love the Murray’ T-shirts and paraded themselves in front of this Parliament House. In South Australia, those opposite were happy to campaign on the fact that they were going to save the Murray River. But as soon as the election was over, where were they? They have turned their backs on $600 million of water buybacks which were critical to South Australia. They have turned their backs on the 450 gigalitres of additional water to put back into the river Murray, that we fought tooth and nail for. We did that because we understood the importance of restoring the flows to the Riverland fruit growers in South Australia, who had been doing it tough for a decade under drought and needed every drop of water they could get. If those growers are denied the water they desperately need, what does the member for Hindmarsh think that will do to productivity and to jobs in South Australia?

Those people are struggling to survive now—improving their productivity would mean jobs for the Riverland area and it would mean jobs for South Australia, because their produce goes to small-business people, wineries and the like. Yet members opposite were happy to campaign saying, ‘We are going to save the Murray if you elect us’, but then turn their backs on that as soon as they were elected. And—of all people—the member for Hindmarsh, who brings this motion into the House, has not said a word about the water buybacks or the 450 gigalitres of extra water that he knows we fought tooth and nail for. Premier Jay Weatherill led the charge in respect of ensuring that we got that additional 450 gigalitres.

Mr Briggs interjecting—

Mr ZAPPIA: I would just like to finish on this point: the member for Hindmarsh comes in here and talks about a government that is going to grow the economy and all the rest. Let me quote to him the headline of an article only this Friday on the front page of The Australian—not a paper that is supportive generally of Labor politics in this country. The headline says: 'Investment spending will fall: Worst slump in 20 years'. This is what they predict under the new Abbott government—the worst slump in 20 years. And you cannot keep blaming what has happened in the past for what is projected to occur in the future—that view is based on the policies of the government of the day and the policies it is espousing for the future. Investors make decisions based on those things. And what they expect is the worst slump in 20 years—that is what people in this country have to look forward to under an Abbott government, and that is what they will have to look forward to in South Australia under the Liberals—if they are lucky enough to win the next state election. That worries me,
because there will be further jobs lost in the manufacturing sector and in the mining sector. According to the same article, manufacturing is already down by 20 per cent, and mining is expected to fall by another 25 per cent. Both industries are critical to the future of South Australia—as they have been critical to South Australia for the last three or four decades. We need to support our mining. We need to support our manufacturing. We are not going to support them by implementing policies that are already scaring investors away from South Australia.

This motion is nothing more than a political stunt. The South Australian government is doing the right thing: preparing for the future, investing in the future, and ensuring that South Australia has a viable future—(Time expired)

Mr PASIN (Barker) (10:39): I am disappointed to hear the member for Makin indicate that discussion about disturbingly high unemployment rates in South Australia is nothing more than political point-scoring. That is not the case. High unemployment rates in South Australia are a matter of grave concern.

I am a passionate South Australian: I hope I have made as much clear in the first short while of being in this place. I think, effectively, my priorities are: No. 1, South Australia; No. 2, South Australia; No. 3, South Australia. In fact I feel so much about my state that despite being a passionate advocate and supporter of the Essendon Football Club, deep down when Port Adelaide and the Crows are playing a part of me hopes that they do well. But I am embarrassed by the state of the South Australian economy and I am ashamed by the South Australian government.

In speaking to this, I thought I would get together a list of South Australian Labor state government's greatest hits. I am a fan of the greatest hits albums so I thought I would go through the list. I am grateful that we have the member for Wakefield and the member for Makin here to hear some of these. To be truthful, I am surprised that we have got northern suburb MPs arguing this case on behalf of 'Jay for SA'. I do note that there is a particularly nice ring to 'Don for later on'! When I first heard Jay for SA, I was in support of it because I thought it was Jay for South Africa and I was waiting in the departure lounge.

But let us get back to the greatest hits. Small and medium businesses in South Australia have surely the worst business conditions in mainland Australia. Payroll tax is off the charts. Maybe the member for Wakefield could listen to this: the youth unemployment rate in the northern suburbs in Adelaide is at 45 per cent. Regional South Australia, thankfully, has an unemployment rate of eight per cent.

Mr Champion: What is it in Murray Bridge then? Tell us what it is in Murray Bridge.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Order! Member for Wakefield, you will have your turn shortly.

Mr PASIN: Kick him out! It would be cause for great acclamation! What about some of these other greatest hits? I am pleased to say that in my region unemployment on average in regional South Australia is at about eight per cent and in the south-east, 6½ per cent.

The jobless rate is of great concern. But Labor had a plan for this. The South Australian Strategic Plan proudly boasted that 100,000 jobs would be created in South Australia. What happened? Instead of creating 4,200 jobs a month, we lost 4,600 jobs a month. That sounds
pretty important: you promise one thing but deliver another—and I am referring here perhaps to the carbon tax. But effectively, what has happened in South Australia is that we have transitioned 30,000 private-sector jobs to 20,000 public-sector jobs. That is the difficulty we enjoy in South Australia. We have a centralist state government that does not understand that it is private industry, private businesses, that create and support jobs.

It is not a surprise that we are losing these private-sector jobs. Economic conditions for running businesses in South Australia are the most difficult in the nation. Over a period of 12 years where CPI increased by 39 per cent, state taxes increased by—wait for it—92 per cent, gas bills by 136 per cent, electricity bills by 140 per cent and, not to be outdone, water bills by 227 per cent! Little wonder that businesses in South Australia, facing these imposts, are finding it difficult to create employment. I will not even go to the WorkCover rate, which is twice the national average.

What then? That is the bad news, but the darkest hour is of course always just before the dawn. The people of South Australia have an opportunity on 15 March to right the wrongs of the last 12 years and do what the Australian people did on 7 September and pass judgement on those that have delivered these greatest hits. South Australians want a South Australian government that understands that only a business-led recovery will deliver outcomes for South Australia. Steven Marshall and his team have a plan for that growth—lower taxes and less regulation. In my home town of Mount Gambier, I am pleased to say that Troy Bell from Mount Gambier will deliver that seat and help Steven Marshall deliver government.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (10:44): The member for Hindmarsh brings this motion to the House. It is always very interesting to see—the last time I saw the member for Hindmarsh roaming around this sort of rhetoric was down at Holden. He came through like a little meerkat, following the minister on his tour through Holden. Of course, we know what happened there. He toured the factory, disappeared for a while and then we never heard anything more until we saw Joe Hockey's daring of GM to leave.

The South Australians opposite talk a good game about the South Australian economy, but on that critical issue of Holden they all came down—Minister MacFarlane, the member for Hindmarsh and all these other people—and toured the factory, posed for pictures—

Mr Pasin: You wrote to them!

Mr CHAMPION: My friend knows that if there were a Labor government, Holden would have continued producing cars in South Australia.

But what happened was that the minister came down and toured the factory with a sort of crowd behind him—Liberal senators and the member for Hindmarsh—all touring the place. Then what did we get? 'Hockey dares GM to leave.' We know the subsequent chaos that was caused in the car industry and the automotive components industry with 50,000 jobs lost. That is what we are looking down the barrel of.

I notice that the language in part (c) of this motion says, in rather glorious terms:

(c) liberate the people of South Australia to realise their destiny; and …

'Liberate' them—in this case, as the deputy leader says, 'Liberate them from their jobs.'

We know that that is what the Liberal Party plans to do because Tony Abbott, when he announced the $100 million plan to help Holden's closure—that has now been stretched to Geelong, Altona and to the whole economy of western Melbourne—said:
Prime Minister Tony Abbott says many Holden workers will be "liberated" by the loss of their jobs at the carmaker.

So we see the same language used—quite extraordinary language, that you might be 'liberated' by losing your job.

We know that around the world there is a debate going on: growth versus austerity—whether we grow the economy or whether we cut it back. That is the great debate around the world. The rest of the world tried austerity first and now they are clinging to growth. In this country we grew. We decided to grow the economy and the Liberals now want to rescue us from that growth by cutting—by austerity. That is the debate around the world, but the Liberal Party are going to get it back to front. They are going to save us from a growing economy. Only in this sort of strange, weird world that the Liberal Party and the member for Hindmarsh create are workers liberated by losing their jobs or liberated by factory closures. Only in this world does cutting taxes produce more revenue and balanced budgets. Only in this weird world; it is sort of voodoo economics.

We know what the Liberal Party plan is for South Australia. It is the same plan they had in New South Wales and it is the same plan that they had in Queensland. It is the same plan they have for the nation, which is a secret commission for cuts. They do not have the courage to tell the South Australian people about the cuts. We had the member for Barker talking about 20,000 public sector jobs but not having the courage to use the figures of the former SA opposition leader, Isobel Redmond, and in a wave of honesty admit they were going to cut 20,000 public sector jobs. That is what he wants to do; that is what he is intimating. That is what the secret commission of cuts will do.

We know that they will hold back on infrastructure. Whatever they say, Torrens to Torrens is ready to go; instead they will hold back. We know that they will wreak our shipbuilding industry, and they will not go ahead with the Collins class submarine. You can see them slowly getting around it. They have a US Navy general in charge of reviewing current shipbuilding. We can see them backing away from the Collins class. And so the questions before the South Australian people are, 'Do you want to continue with a growing economy, with cranes over the horizon of Adelaide? With growth? Or do you want to see cutbacks? Do you want to see austerity? Do you want to see job losses? Do you want to see the resulting economic damage?' You only have to look to Queensland and you only have to look to this parliament to see their plans in action: jobs lost and economic growth collapsing.

Debate adjourned.

**Human Rights: North Korea**

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10:49): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) the United Nations Human Rights Council's Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) released on 17 February 2014;

(b) the gravity, scale and nature of human rights violations and crimes against humanity which have been and are being committed systematically by the DPRK, including murder, enslavement, starvation, torture, rape and persecution on the grounds of race, religion and gender, and other inhumane acts;
(c) first hand testimony from DPRK refugees, escapees and asylum seekers;
(d) the political and security apparatus of the DPRK and the use of tactics including surveillance, selective distribution of food, fear, public executions and forced disappearances; and
(e) the crimes against humanity against non-DPRK citizens through international abduction and forced repatriation;
(2) recognises the significance of the public hearings held by the commission of inquiry, in informing the report;
(3) acknowledges the work of the Chair of the commission of inquiry, the Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG, and his important contribution to improved international understanding and capacity to respond to the state of human rights in the DPRK; and
(4) calls on the Government to take all available steps to:
   (a) support the recommendations of the report;
   (b) urge United Nations action on the findings of the report; and
   (c) support efforts to hold those responsible for crimes accountable through the International Criminal Court.

I rise today to draw attention to the United Nations Human Rights Council's Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The report is the outcome of 12 months' work since the UN's Human Rights Council established a commission to investigate the systematic and widespread violations of human rights in North Korea. While no-one with any interest in world affairs would be shocked to hear that the North Korean regime engages in systematic human rights abuses, this report was drafted with a view to ensuring that those responsible for these abuses will be held accountable. The report also provides a great degree of authority, through extensive evidence of crimes and through a greater level of detailed research and reporting than previous reports. As the commission's statement said on the report's release:

The gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world.

That a rigorous inquiry, with firsthand testimony, was carried out in a transparent way following due process, is a very important first step to ensure that the world is aware of what is taking place inside North Korea.

The extensive public hearings were a vital feature of the inquiry. The Commission of Inquiry conducted public hearings—in Seoul, Tokyo, London and Washington—during which almost 80 victims and witnesses of human rights violations, as well as experts, provided testimony on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. An additional 240 victims and witnesses who feared reprisals for their testimony against family members who remain in North Korea were able to give evidence confidentially to the commission and its secretariat. Through these public hearings and interviews, the commission found that systematic, widespread and gross violations of human rights have been and are being committed in North Korea, based on state policies—that is, the policies of the government.

The report breaks down the human rights violations into a number of discrete categories, finding: widespread violations of the freedoms of thought, expression and religion; discrimination; violations of the freedom of movement and residence; violations of the right to food and the right to life; arbitrary detention, torture, executions and prison camps; and
abductions and enforced disappearances, including even from other countries. The report focuses on the consideration of crimes against humanity committed against six groups of victims: inmates of political prison camps; inmates of the ordinary prison system, in particular, political prisoners among them; religious believers and others considered to introduce a subversive influence; persons who try to leave the country; starving populations; and people from other countries who became victims of international abductions and enforced disappearances.

The report finds that the political and security apparatus of the single-party DPRK regime is directly responsible for these crimes. The state bears responsibility for carrying out systematic and widespread attacks against anyone who is considered to pose a threat to the political system and leadership. It bears responsibility for leading a systematic and widespread attack against the general population by knowingly aggravating its starvation; sacrificing the lives of large numbers of innocent citizens in order to preserve the political system and its leadership; and for abducting and forcibly disappearing a large number of persons from other countries in a systematic and widespread manner in order to gain labour and skills. Recent reporting from North Korea serves as a sobering reminder of the priorities of the current regime. While a basketball celebrity is hosted by the government, 120,000 citizens are detained in labour camps as political prisoners by their own government. This represents approximately one in every 200 citizens of the DPRK. It is almost impossible to imagine numbers on that scale.

Based on the body of testimony and information received, the commission found that the DPRK authorities have committed and are committing crimes against humanity in the political prison camps, including extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape and other grave sexual violence and persecution on political, religious and gender grounds. Guards and security agents serving in the political prison camps are taught to consider inmates to be subhuman enemies, who no longer enjoy citizens' rights. Accordingly, they are instructed to treat inmates without pity.

According to the commission's findings, hundreds of thousands of inmates have been exterminated in political prison camps and other places over a span of more than five decades. In order to eliminate perceived political enemies over the course of three generations, entire groups of people, including families with their children, have perished in the prison camps because of who they were and not what they had personally done. Some of the most disturbing interviews I think have come from one member of a family, who has explained that it was the action of that one member of the family that was responsible for the whole family being taken into custody and taken to a prison camp. Sometimes that member of the family, or the family as a whole, was not even told what they had been accused of doing. The imprisonment of entire families on the principle of guilt by association has been a defining feature of the DPRK's political prison camps. There are many instances where whole families, including children, have been sent to prison camps for the wrongs committed by a family member, and the interviews with parents in particular explaining their feelings on being responsible for their children being taken into these camps are truly harrowing.

Even where families are spared prison camps they often remain subject to harsh official reprisals, including being removed from their jobs through associative guilt. Families of prisoners are also subject to heightened persecution and surveillance, as are families with
members who are missing or who have defected. There are also cases of families being forcibly relocated due to a family member having been charged as a political dissident and sentenced to a political prison camp. These relocations are often to remote or isolated areas where mass starvation is common.

Another assault on whole families is dealt to those persons with disabilities. These families are simply 'not allowed to live in Pyongyang' and are regularly relocated out of the capital. Immense hardship is also faced by families who have been separated between the north and the south before and during the Korean War. These families had little or no opportunity to see each other, exchange letters or speak over the telephone for more than six decades. At the end of 2013, the Unified Information Center for Separated Families had on its register of 'separated families', 129,264 persons, about 71½ thousand alive and close to 60,000 deceased.

I think that it is appropriate that the House acknowledge the work of the commission's chair, former High Court Justice Michael Kirby. Justice Kirby has long been a tireless advocate for human rights both here in Australia and abroad, and the United Nations could not have found a more qualified individual for this role. Justice Kirby was joined by Sonja Biserko from Serbia and Marzuki Darusman from Indonesia, and I would like to acknowledge their contributions to this important work also.

Also and most particularly, I acknowledge the bravery of witnesses, those who have been closest to the atrocities and hurt most by the crimes in question. Their brief contribution in coming forward and speaking out took phenomenal courage and strength, and without their will the investigation which made the report possible would not have occurred. For their sake and for the sake of all North Koreans, the international community must take action. Noting the report's finding that 'systemic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea', no-one can claim ignorance of the atrocities committed by the North Korean regime any longer. I call on the government to support the report's recommendations.

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

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

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (10:59): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion. Certainly, it is true that the world did not need this report to know there is a problem in North Korea and that there has been a wide and terrible history of abuse of human rights in that country. Whenever you look at such a regime, an autocratic regime where rule is handed down son to son, a regime that is obscured by secrecy and isolation—a hallmark of everything they do—you can be certain that oppression and abuse of human rights will endure. This report has given substance to the depth of the realities surrounding the regime. There is a darkness that surrounds North Korea. The United Nations Human Rights Council's Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea opens the regime to greater scrutiny.

It is regrettable that the North Korean government chose not to respond or participate in any way—regrettable and certainly predictable. It is a demonstration of exactly the problem—their general approach and their inability to defend their record of horrendous and disgraceful abuses of human rights. China could have contributed by providing access to those who have escaped from North Korea and I find it sad that China did not participate. It is also a shame
that the Chinese government actually rejected even the existence of the commission. The participation of China would have created further opportunities to properly and accurately assess just how terrible the situation is in North Korea. I note that on 20 February during the human rights dialogue with China, Australia raised the issue with China and urged them to allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees access to those who have crossed the border into China.

I pay tribute to the chair, the members and the secretariat of the commission for the efforts they put into the inquiry and the resulting report. One could imagine that it would have been fascinating to hear all the witnesses but, at the same time, it would have been a harrowing and challenging experience, given accounts of abuse, torture, murder and rape.

Australia applauds the commission of inquiry's efforts to uncover the deplorable human rights record of the North Korean government. The report has shown that, over many decades, North Korea has denied its people basic rights and freedoms, and subjected them to gross human rights violations. The Australian government has urged North Korea to implement the commission's recommendations, including on reunion of separated families, repatriation of abductees, repeal of laws allowing for arbitrary decisions by authorities and the death penalty. I note that in the commission's report, detailed factual and legal analysis has been provided and the Australian government will study these carefully ahead of its consideration at the 17 March Human Rights Council meeting. I welcome the commitment by the government to promote and advance the cause of human rights for North Koreans beyond the halls of Geneva. To that end, Australia will determine how we can use our membership of international bodies and work with others to give a greater profile to the report and to this cause.

On 20 February, Australia was among those who raised the report in the UN Security Council during the quarterly briefing on the North Korean sanctions committee, noting that it deserves the attention of council members. It should also be noted that the Australian government regularly raises its concerns on human rights in North Korea both bilaterally and multilaterally. It is also true that Australia's Seoul based ambassador raised North Korea's appalling record with their ministers in Pyongyang in November last year. Therefore, I consider that available steps have been taken by the Australian government to take action on this report.

In the remaining time available to me, I would like to examine some of the principal findings of the report. It is true to say that the excesses of the state are, I guess, tolerated, but, in fact, the report found that the human rights abuses form the basis of how that government runs the country and controls its people. That is a tragedy and there is no parallel to this across the world. Some people call it the hermit kingdom or a pariah state. That is absolutely the case.

The systems within North Korea are there to control the people completely. Look at systems such as the Songbun, a system of rigid levels of status in society. These systems amount to state determined discrimination. Everyone is classified on the basis of a social class that has been allocated based on their birth or the directions of the state. Songbun determines where people can live, their accommodation, their educational access and even who they can marry. While some aspects of that have been modified by increased economic activity and economic markets, the reality is that it is an insidious system where people are controlled.
based on how the state determines who they are. Not only are all those determinations under Songbun, what makes it even worse is that the distribution of food is determined based on the Songbun system of rigid class.

Yes, Pyongyang is looked after and food is sent to Pyongyang. Everyone knows of the famine of the 1990s, but there has also been a shortage of food in North Korea for the last generation.

Under the Songbun system, only people who are considered essential and people at the highest levels of society get access to food. The remainder of the population are discriminated against according to their standing in the Songbun system. They are restricted from moving around the country and their access to jobs is restricted. They are controlled and required to remain in their location even if there is a lack of food. This system oppresses the people of North Korea.

A few years ago I saw a documentary about North Korea. The daughter of one family, who was probably in late primary school, commented when there was a blackout in their apartment that it must have been the Americans interrupting their power supply—a completely ridiculous and illogical comment. This system, where the North Korean government controls information, prosecutes those who do not comply with their rules, rewards those who inform on others' political activities and indoctrinates North Koreans from birth and throughout their entire lives. Children being forced to accept only the state system, adults being forced to comply and people receiving food based upon their standing in the system—this is the terrible system of human rights abuses and the abuse of any form of government by the regime in North Korea.

It is good to see this report, Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It highlights so much of what is wrong with North Korea. I advise everyone who has an interest in this area to have a close look at this fascinating but tragic report.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (11:09): Here are three stories from North Korea's prison camps. First, a story told by camp survivor Ms Jee Heon A:

... there was this pregnant woman ... The babies who were born were usually dead, but in this case the baby was born alive. The baby was crying as it was born, so we were curious, this was the first time we saw a baby being born. So we were watching this baby and we were so happy. But suddenly we heard the footsteps. The security agent ... told us to put the baby in the water upside down. So the mother was begging. 'I was told that I would not be able to have the baby, but I actually got lucky and got pregnant so please let me keep the baby, please forgive me.' But the agent kept beating this woman, the mother who just gave birth. And the baby, since it was just born, it was just crying. And the mother, with her shaking hands she picked up the baby and she put the baby face down in the water. The baby stopped crying and we saw this water bubble coming out of the mouth of the baby.

Second, an account told by Mr Jeong Kwang-il:

A man left his work unit to take some potatoes because he was extremely hungry. Fearing that the guards would try to consider this an attempted escape, he tried to hide. The guards chased tracker dogs after him. The dogs found and mauled the man until he was half dead. Then the guards shot the victim dead on the spot.

Third, an event recounted by Mr Shin Dong-hyuk. Mr Shin was 13 years old when he reported a conversation he overheard between his mother and brother in which they talked
about escaping from the camp. As a result, his mother and brother were both executed. Along with all other inmates, Mr Shin had to watch the public execution of his mother and his brother.

I have only five minutes to speak about the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. But even if I had five hours I could not do justice to the depravity outlined in the pages the Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. People were sent to prison camps for watching a foreign movie, for accidentally using a mobile phone, for accidentally spilling food on a picture of Kim Jong-il or for owning a Bible.

A third of the North Korean population malnourished; at least a third of children stunted; a million or more starved to death; mass rape; beatings; public executions; forced abortions of people who return from China, a practice that is driven by racist attitudes in North Korea towards the Chinese; the collective punishment of families; trafficking of women and girls—all this while the leadership build statues of themselves and import Mercedes and fine cognac.

This report will give you nightmares. It is the closest thing I have read to pure evil, yet it is the truth. The commission of inquiry has carried out its work with impeccable thoroughness. It has conducted extensive public hearings in Seoul, Tokyo, London and Washington. Regrettably, the Chinese government did not cooperate with the inquiry. It is a pity as China has much to gain from ending the abuses on its doorstep.

The inquiry was chaired by Michael Kirby, for whom I had the privilege to work as a judge's associate. Australia has no more powerful advocate of human rights than Michael Kirby. He has done our nation proud in this work—a report underpinned by the fundamental belief that all of us are of equal worth.

The North Korean prison camps have survived twice as long as Stalin's Soviet gulags and much longer than the Nazi concentration camps. The policies of North Korea are responsible for perhaps millions of deaths. The report demands action, yet too many seem to be looking away.

I urge the government to take strong action on this report. That includes arguing in the Security Council for targeted sanctions, using our seat on the Security Council as an opportunity; arguing in the General Assembly for better human rights monitoring of North Korea; supporting referral of the report to the International Criminal Court; and working with our friends in the Chinese government to see them take action that will benefit China. These acts will demand courage by Australia but to do them we must only believe one thing: that the newborn baby I described at the start of my speech was the moral equal of any of us. If we believe that, we cannot stay silent.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:14): I rise today to speak on this motion and to remind the House that Australia applauds the commission of inquiry's efforts to expose the deplorable human rights record of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea government. A United Nations panel led by retired High Court Judge Michael Kirby says that crimes against humanity have been committed in the DPRK. This report is the most authoritative account yet of human rights violations by North Korean authorities.

In UN resolution 22/13, adopted on 21 March 2013, the Human Rights Council established a commission of inquiry on human rights in the DPRK. The council mandated the
commission to investigate the systemic, widespread and grave violations of human rights including in particular the following nine specific substantive areas: violations of the right to food; the full range of violations associated with prison camps; torture and inhumane treatment; discrimination, in particular the systemic denial and violation of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms; violations of the freedom of expression; violations of the right to life; violations of the freedom of movement; enforced disappearances; and arbitrary arrest and detention including in the form of abductions of nationals of other states. This is a non-exhaustive list.

Following the announcement of the commission's investigation, the Human Rights Council urged the North Korean government to cooperate fully with the investigation, to permit the commission's members unrestricted access to visit the country and to provide them with all information necessary to enable them to fulfil their mandate. Immediately after the adoption of resolution 22/13, the DPRK publically stated that it would 'totally reject and disregard' the inquiry. In a letter dated 10 May 2013, the DPRK government informed the president of the Human Rights Council that it 'totally and categorically rejects the commission of inquiry'.

Due to this unchanged lack of access to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the commission obtained firsthand testimony through hearings that were transparent, observed due process and protected victims and witnesses. More than 80 witnesses and experts testified publically and provided information of great specificity, detail and relevance, in ways that often required a significant degree of courage.

The commission found that in many instances the violations found crimes against humanity based on state policies. The commission found that there is an almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, information and association.

The state manufactures absolute obedience to the supreme leader, effectively to the exclusion of any thought independent of official ideology and state propaganda. Propaganda is further used by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to incite nationalistic hatred towards official enemies of the state including Japan, the United States of America, the Republic of Korea, and their nationals. Citizens are denied the right to access to information from independent sources. Discrimination is rooted in the Songbun system, which classifies people on the basis of state assigned social class and birth, and also included consideration of political opinions and religion.

In North Korea, the state imposes on citizens where they must live and work, violating their freedom of choice. Moreover, the forced assignment to a state designated place of residence and employment is heavily driven by discrimination based on Songbun. This has created a socioeconomically and physically segregated society where people considered politically loyal to the leadership can live and work in favourable locations whereas families of persons who are considered politically suspect are relegated to marginalised areas.

Unfortunately, justice for the crimes is a distant prospect—not least as North Korea's ally, China, is likely to block any referral to the International Criminal Court. However, Australia will continue to urge China to allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees access to independently assess North Korean border crossers.
The report recommends steps towards accountability as well as building international pressure on North Korea, whose parlous human rights record has drawn less censure at the UN than its nuclear and missile programs. Australia urges North Korea to implement the commission's recommendations. Australia will do its part to ensure this report resonates beyond Geneva. The Australian government regularly raises its concerns about human rights in the DPRK both bilaterally and in multilateral settings.

It is a long road to obtaining a positive outcome. However, it is important that Australia continues to add its voice to the international community to stop these human rights violations, and I commend this motion to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Programme for International Student Assessment

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (11:19): I move the motion relating to the Programme for International Student Assessment in the terms in which it appears on the Notice Paper:

That this House notes:
(1) with concern:
(a) the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012 survey, which are the worst for Australia since testing began and show that Australia is falling further behind its regional neighbours on critical objective measures; and
(b) that, in spite of a 44 per cent increase in education funding by the Government during the last decade, student performance has declined, which indicates that there is much more to improving educational outcomes for our children than simply increasing funding;
(2) that the PISA 2012 survey has also revealed how critical teacher quality is to Australia's education system and to lifting student outcomes and how outcomes for students, regardless of which school they attend, are directly affected by the quality of the teaching they receive;
(3) that the Government's response to the PISA 2012 survey emphasises the critical importance of teacher quality to Australia's education system and to lifting student outcomes, coupled with a robust curriculum, expanding autonomy for principals, and encouraging more parental engagement; and
(4) the Government's consistent commitment to ensuring a fairer, needs based funding arrangement for schools nationally, to deliver better schools for Australian students.

Few issues are more important to the future of our country than the education of our children. Education is, figuratively, a nation's heart and soul. But it is also literally every nation's future. Australia is no exception. So the latest Programme for International Student Assessment or PISA results should be a cause for concern and a call to action.

The results are the worst for Australia since testing began and show that we are falling further behind our regional neighbours. If you look at the trend lines, we have decreased: from 15th to 19th in mathematical literacy; from 10th to 16th in scientific literacy; and from ninth to 14th in reading literacy. In my home state of Tasmania this issue is doubly important, given we have the lowest retention rates into years 11 and 12 in Australia. We also have the lowest adult literacy rates in the country, highlighting that those left behind in the classroom suffer those consequences into adulthood. We on this side of the House believe that all students deserve our support, regardless of the choice parents make for their education. Better educational results today support a smarter and more competitive nation tomorrow. But there is so much to be done.
Despite billions more for education during the last decade, education results have declined. During the last six years we have listened to grand promises about an education revolution and then an even grander-sounding 'education crusade'. But what have we gained from this six-year revolution and crusade?

We have seen overpriced school halls, overpromising of computers in schools and overblown rhetoric about 'catching up with Shanghai kids', yet student outcomes have declined.

Statistics over 10, 20 and 40 years are instructive. Ten years ago, eight per cent of year 3 children did not achieve minimum national benchmarks. A decade later in 2013, NAPLAN results revealed that this had jumped by 50 per cent, with almost 12 per cent of children in year 3 achieving a very low rating, or below, for reading. That is despite an almost 50 per cent funding increase.

In the last 20 years educational funding has doubled to $40 billion per year, yet our student results in national and international tests have fallen. Research from the member for Fraser confirms that over the last 40 years, despite an almost 260 per cent increase in school spending, literacy and numeracy outcomes have declined. Standards have not improved, despite more dollars, smaller class sizes, $16 billion in new buildings and a laptop spending spree. There is simply no logic in the arguments put forward by those opposite and highly politicised teachers unions that just more dollars is the answer. Labor's fistful of dollars approach to education clearly has more to do with politics and ideology than it does with evidence.

We have to start talking more about standards than dollars. We should be discussing how to help teachers whose own literacy skills impede their ability to teach reading effectively. The final report of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy in 2005, for example, revealed that less than 10 per cent of compulsory units in primary teaching degrees were allocated to reading instruction. Then Minister for Education, Science and Training Brendan Nelson welcomed the inquiry's recommendations and said that we simply must prepare teachers better to teach reading as their key focus.

The inquiry's literature review found that quality of teaching has the largest impact on a child's learning to read. It is a factor of far greater importance than a child's background or their family circumstances. The inquiry found that, in the first three years of school and beyond if necessary, all children learn to read most effectively through an approach to reading that emphasises phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary knowledge and text comprehension. The report highlighted repeatedly that teacher quality was the most valuable resource in making a difference in classrooms.

What does that mean? Quite simply it means that scarce taxpayer dollars must be applied to the key factors that determine better educational outcomes: improving teacher quality, greater autonomy in decision-making by principals and parent-teacher organisations, parental engagement and a quality curriculum. I recall former Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth Peter Garrett talking about a 'decade of neglect' and how schools were failing our children. Those opposite were in government for six years, and state Labor governments have controlled public education in every state for most of the last decade. In my home state of Tasmania, for example, Labor has been in power for 16 long years and over half of Tasmania's $5 billion is spent on health and education, yet the state of our hospitals and educational outcomes is a distant last on national benchmarks.
Watching the *Late line* television program on 19 February, I listened with a heavy heart as Dr Ben Jensen of the Grattan Institute suggested that the literacy crisis in Tasmania could become unmanageable in the next decade. I know the member for Franklin and other members here this morning will be worried about some of the statistics when we consider how our population is going with their reading, writing and progress in schools. At least half of Tasmania's population cannot read or write properly. More than half of the state's students fell below the national baseline for maths, compared to 42 per cent nationally. Forty-seven per cent failed the minimum standard of English, compared to 36 per cent nationally. This is despite Tasmania's teacher-student ratios being nine per cent higher than those on the mainland.

In his 1955 book *Why Johnny Can't Read* Rudolf Flesch pinpointed quality of instruction as the decisive factor in delivering better educational outcomes. He was right then and he is right now. We must attract high-quality teachers with a vocational commitment to their profession. That requires better selection, better entry standards and ensuring that the professional development of teachers continues throughout their career. Enough time must be devoted in core teaching units to prepare teachers to manage classes and to deliver effective reading instruction. This requires a change in emphasis within university faculties and government education departments. We need much more of a focus on academic rigour and core disciplines that improve literacy and numeracy and less of the left-wing, socially progressive fillers that currently dominate the national curriculum. We must put more emphasis on teaching students how to write effectively and to master the numeracy requirements they need in their everyday lives and future careers.

The current overcrowded, rigid curriculum must be streamlined. That is why the coalition has appointed Professor Ken Wiltshire and Dr Kevin Donnelly to review the national curriculum. Their recommendations to government in mid-2014 will help ensure that the national curriculum puts students first in the government's education policies.

Schools deserve greater independence from the authoritarian command-and-control model that those opposite champion. We need less control from governments, bureaucrats and unions and more from school boards and councils. In conjunction with the above, parents must accept their role in their children's learning and behaviour. This requires parents to do more at home to encourage a learning culture, discipline and cooperative social interaction.

Our collective actions, both federal and state, on education will either help Australian students grab future opportunities or consign them to languish in mediocrity, overtaken and bypassed by others who are better prepared and harder working, in all ways hungrier for a better life and quite willing to pay the price in sheer effort to attain it. This reality is accentuated by our national geography. We sit on the very doorstep of Asia during what pundits have already labelled the 'Asian century', but it might just as fittingly be labelled the 'hypercompetitive century' or, perhaps more positively, the 'education century'. The coalition will work tirelessly, must work tirelessly, to overturn bad education policy and improve existing policy. Our young people deserve nothing less. I commend the motion to the House.

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

*Mr Whiteley:* I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.
Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (11:30): I thank the member for Bass for raising this important issue—and much of what he has said I would agree with. People will perhaps recall that, in my maiden speech, I dealt with some of the failures of our education system, particularly in relation to the teaching of literacy. But I want to use the opportunity today in this debate to really talk about how, unfortunately, the Minister for Education has now got to a position where he is totally missing the most fundamental building block in this whole picture.

Ms Ryan: Hear, hear!

Ms MacTIERNAN: I note my friend the member for Lalor saying, 'Hear, hear!' I think there is a very, very strong case for ensuring that we put more money into areas of greatest need. I do agree across the board that money is not the complete answer in any way, shape or form and that we need a suite of reforms. But I say that the fundamental principle of Gonski is supported by international evidence that those states that do well heavily identify need and put money and locate additional resources to where there is the greatest need. Whilst money is not everything, it is certainly something and it is critical in areas where there are high levels of disadvantage.

I want to talk about what really makes the difference in these education systems. I agree that teacher quality is essential. Teacher quality is absolutely at the core of it—and any examination of the system tells us that. But one of the fundamental things that the Minister for Education is walking away from is ensuring that we actually have being brought into teacher education the intellectual ability to do the job.

I set out in the Federation Chamber the other day some appalling statistics. Around seven per cent of students going into teacher education have an ATAR of less than 50, around 16 per cent have an ATAR of less than 60 and around 27 per cent have an ATAR of less than 70. Initially, the Minister for Education, when he was the opposition education spokesperson, said that this was a significant issue. He made presentations to various forums, including the Sydney Institute, where he talked about the need for us to lift those standards and that, if we are actually going to have an education system that is characterised by rigour—the rigour that the member for Bass was talking about—we have to have personnel who are capable of reaching and delivering that rigour. If we are talking about ATAR performances and general performances that are not in that top 30 per cent, I think we are going to continue to struggle. If you look at what has happened around the world, we see precisely that.

What do they say most profoundly changed the performance of Finland? It was one of the lowest performers in the world, and within the space of around 15 years it became one of the highest achievers in literacy rates and the great achiever in PISA scores. They took a very strategic decision about who they were going to attract into teaching. They actually had a plethora of teacher-training organisations—little teacher-training colleges here and there around the country. They abolished all of them and put teacher training into a few elite universities, and only those people who could get into those elite universities were able to become teachers. Teaching then became a career that was prestigious. Finnish teachers are well paid but they are not paid massively more than teachers in other parts of the world. But, because teaching is seen as a career of choice, you get people really wanting to go into teaching, and that intellectual ability that you need to drive the rigour is there.

This whole debate, to which the Minister for Education, when he was in opposition, used to subscribe has now indeed gone somewhat backwards. He has put in place Vice-Chancellor
Greg Craven—a man I know and personally like; a man I think is a very interesting person—of the Australian Catholic University, which is training around 8,000 students each year. It has an indicative ATAR score of 58 per cent for entry into their university.

I am very conscious that not all students get in under ATAR—and, indeed, a lot of students who have very low ATARs do a bridging course for their first semester and then go on to enter university—but I have to ask: have we got a bar that is set high enough? I want to talk about something that has been said by the Australian Catholic University—something that alarms me. The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education said:

… ATAR cut-offs were an indication of supply and demand for a course, and that an individual's ATAR was no indication of how he or she would perform at university or in the workplace.

I totally understand that they are not the be-all and end-all, and any vice-chancellor of UWA will tell you that you would expect a kid that comes in from a government school with an ATAR of 85 to perform at the level of a kid from a private school with an ATAR of 90.

I get that there is a difference, but there has to be a minimum level which is acceptable. If we are wanting to attract people of ability and make sure that the people we are training to teach others are capable of a sufficient understanding to drive our system forward, to enable us to compete with those nations to our north, we have to be prepared to bite the bullet on this. We cannot let this issue be run by those universities that are providing mass entry level to teacher-training facilities who have a direct economic interest in keeping this wide open.

In 2011 we had a COAG agreement that we were going to make sure that anyone who got into teacher training was in the top 30 per cent of the population in terms of literacy and numeracy. This is being opposed by the Australian Catholic University—who have now been put in charge of overseeing teacher standards. Member for Bass, I know you are a very bright man and I hope that you can lead a party room challenge to the Minister for Education as he backtracks on this fundamental principle. It is not going to do us any good if we do not have people who are capable of doing that.

There is some very interesting evidence in the book The Smartest Kids in the World, particularly on the United States, where, in order to try to respond to this, they made the curriculum harder and made teachers do masters' degrees. What they found—because they had not addressed the fundamental principle of increasing the entry level into the teaching profession—is that all this has amounted to nought; that you have to get that fundamental building block right and make sure that people who go into teaching have the intellectual ability to drive the system forward.

Ms SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (11:40): The latest PISA results, published in 2013, show we had a 20-point drop in mathematical proficiency since 2003—and, dare I say, 16 of those points were dropped between 2006 and 2012. In 2003 only 14.9 per cent of students were below level 2 in maths; yet in 2012 there are 18.3 per cent. Nations like Vietnam, Turkey, Latvia, Japan and even Ireland have now out-performed us. With the billions of dollars poured into education during that period of time, extra school halls and laptops to every student in particular year groups, we as Australian taxpayers would expect to see an amazing growth in achievement levels for our children. Sadly that is not the case. There has been less than a one per cent improvement in maths performance. The final blow comes when you look
at the literacy levels: only 15 per cent of our 15- to 19-year-olds, those at greatest risk of not getting a job, have achieved mid-level literacy compared to 25 per cent of their parents.

Money thrown into schools is not the answer. As an experienced teacher and involved in the supervision of practice teachers, I have seen exactly what effects some of the ridiculous money throwing and weird policy making have created. In 2011, students were supposed to be in schools up to the age of 17—in a widely announced and popular policy called 'earn or learn'. Did anyone at that time ask the classroom teachers just what this might mean to the teaching dynamic? I think not. I sat in classrooms that year as an assessment observer, watching teachers grapple with unnecessary discipline problems, as resentful students attended classes they were not suited for but had to attend because of their age.

The wonderful rollout of laptops was an unmitigated disaster—with no budget for repairs and maintenance, insurance for possible theft and spares for classroom use and no technology available to stop students using these for entertainment during class rather than as research tools. The following is a true story. A young practice teacher asked her students in year 9 to close their laptops for the next part of her lesson, but the young boys in the back of the class had them open and continued to play their games. At least with notebooks—and I mean the paper kind—you could see if they were closed or not and students learnt to write. It is no surprise that our numeracy and literacy achievement levels have declined. Many schools have a storeroom loaded with broken and damaged laptops, with no money to take them to the local tip—and no extra budget in place to replace these assets, especially as the rate of technological advance has meant that many of these devices now have redundant or incompatible applications.

We as a nation must invest in education—there is no argument from any person in government or parent or educator—but the discussion point is: where is the best investment dollar? Experienced teachers will tell you, especially if asked, that in-service and training in this changing and dynamic profession is critical. Stop dumping every social problem at the feet of teachers and expecting them to implement solutions with little or no training. Our outstanding teachers are facing so many different issues in the classroom: students with behavioural problems or learning difficulties; having fully integrated and inclusive classrooms, which is recognised as being of social benefit but stretches their personal resources; and test regimes which at times have inappropriate community expectations. It is time to address the real mechanism of better educational outcomes for our nation.

It is essential to have core curriculum subjects. We are a highly mobile nation and moving from school to school is hard enough but from state to state is very difficult. Most importantly, student outcomes have a direct relationship with teacher quality. If a teacher has the qualifications, the tools of their craft, support from the school admin structure and the ability to put different professional strategies in place, the students will achieve. The OECD 2013 report adds that increased student achievement is gained by: parental involvement; principals who act as communication leaders with both parents and teachers; classrooms conducive to learning; good teacher-student relationships; and quality teachers. This is the philosophy behind our initiative Students First.

Additional research on 'effective schools' suggests a strong relationship between the quality of an orderly learning environment, teacher quality and student performance. Our teachers are the greatest asset for educational improvement. Now is the time to invest in them, talk and
consult with them. It is important to get their views—they are in the classrooms. The best source of information is from the teachers—not representative groups, but those still facing a class every day and taking care of the nurturing and education of our children. Quality teaching is the mechanism to improve student outcomes.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (11:45): I thank the member for Bass for raising education in this place and keeping it on the agenda. Having been a school principal, I have a deep understanding of the ins and outs of school funding. It is fair to say that when I talk about education funding reform I am, to use the words of the Prime Minister, sticking to my knitting.

On both sides of the House we are, at least on the face of it, in broad agreement that urgent reform of the education system is required—as we have just heard from our previous speakers—although I am a little puzzled that money is actually being identified as the problem.

The coalition's pre-election pledge that 'every single school in Australia will receive, dollar for dollar, the same federal funding over the next four years whether there is a Liberal or Labor government' seemed unequivocal. But it is now apparent again here today that this was just a cynical ploy by the LNP to gain power. Let us be clear: by breaking this promise on the Gonski reforms, those opposite are willingly and stupidly stealing from our nation's potential. The member for Bass makes the point that education funding has increased by 40 per cent with no apparent improvement in educational outcomes as a justification for going back on a promise. This is at best naive and at worst deliberately cherry picking stats to bend a predetermined narrative.

The most compelling figures coming from PISA are around inequity. It is the ball and chain that is holding this country back in education performance, and to say otherwise is disingenuous. The Gonski report followed intensive consultation across the education sector. It asked teachers, principals, academics, politicians, economists and private and public schools—all stakeholders had a say, and all were listened to. The Better Schools Plan that came from this report was wide-ranging and addressed the issues identified for improvement, some of which we have heard mentioned today by those opposite.

For the first time ever across Australia, state schools, Catholic schools and independent schools agreed on a way forward. The politics were removed in most states. The work was done and the way was clear. Now we see a slinking away from these commitments. Last week in Senate estimates we heard the proof of it. It was revealed that the states have clearly been released from their pre-election education funding commitments. These funding commitments were one of the structural pillars that held up the Gonski reforms. With states now free to slash their education funding, the government has reduced Gonski to ruins. In its place? The member for Bass makes the point that schools need greater autonomy, which of course was in Gonski. He might be surprised to find out that Victoria did just that under the Kennett government many years ago, and it was called Schools of the Future. Victorian schools are well down this path. It worked well for a few schools in the initial years, but it made life very difficult for many others.

The minister might want to talk to leaders and parents who lived the experience of being thrown into a competitive environment where autonomy ruled but support for schools to make the transition was minimal. He might also want to ponder what impact autonomy without support might have on equity, because there is a real danger, as was seen in the first years in
Victoria, that inequity could be further embedded. Some schools had parents well equipped to take a school forward in partnership with a principal, while others did not. I might also add that, having lived this experience myself, I saw an enormous amount of money moved from classrooms to marketing campaigns in the early years, sometimes indiscriminately. He might be further surprised to find that, in a tale of two states, while Victoria travelled this road, New South Wales did not and still centrally control their schools. After 20 years, there is little or nothing between the two states in terms of educational outcomes. Giving schools greater autonomy is not the magic bullet it is claimed it to be. It will not do the work that the Gonski report set out to deliver.

Education is the cornerstone of democracy and it is the single most effective way of breaking intergenerational disadvantage. We can only conclude that this government does not want to break intergenerational disadvantage. I call on the government to honour its promise and put in place the Gonski measures, as intended by the former Labor government and all who signed up to it.

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (11:49): It is a great opportunity to speak on this motion concerning the results of the PISA 2012 survey, which sadly show that Australia has delivered the worst outcomes for us as a nation since testing began. I heard the previous speaker talk a lot about academics, school principals—as she herself is—the unions and teachers themselves. That is all good, but today I want to stand here as the representative for Braddon and ask what the parents of our children think and, more importantly, what the employers in my electorate are saying about the current education system.

We have survey of 65 countries, where 15,000 students—that is not a bad sample, I would have thought—from 775 schools were randomly picked to do a survey crossing mathematics, science and reading. The reality here is that, when it comes to mathematics, we are ranked 19th out of those 65 countries; when it comes to science, 16th; and reading, 13th. As I said before, these are the worst rankings that this country has produced since the testing began.

Sadly for our country, the average student in China is now two full years ahead of the average Australian student when it comes to science and 18 months ahead when it comes to mathematics and reading. These are our trading partners, these are our competitors and these are the people that are setting the pace across the globe. We hear so much from state education ministers and state premiers—as is the case in Tasmania at the moment, which I will get to in a moment—when they announce so boldly, proudly and enthusiastically that ‘we have spent a record amount of money in education—how good are we?’ And yet standards have declined significantly. Parents tell me that every single day, and employers absolutely tell me that they are not getting from the education system the potential employees that they need. Funding is increasing but performances and standards are falling. Something is not right; something is fundamentally wrong.

When it comes to Tasmania, we have amongst the largest falls in educational outcomes of any state. We are the worst performing in Australia, second only to the Northern Territory. In all three categories my state of Tasmania is the worst ranked state. What a dismal performance, something that I am far from proud of. I would hope that in my time in this place, together with, hopefully, a new minister for education in the state of Tasmania, we can work together to increase those standards significantly. We have a lot of work to do and there will be a great deal of time required to deliver it, but we have had 16 years of a Tasmanian
Labor government where we have failed our young people when it comes to education. It should be noted that the last four years were in fact with an education minister from the Greens coalition side of the equation when it came to the handing out of portfolios. Not only are Tasmanian children more likely to have below-average results in maths, science and reading but they are far less likely to remain at school for years 11 and 12. Retention and completion rates are the worst in the country, just 67 per cent of children going on to year 11 and 47 per cent going on to complete year 12.

There is much work to be done. The work can be done with a diligent new Liberal state government, hopefully, being elected on 15 March where we will provide an additional $45 million over four years towards extending 21 high schools in the state to year 12 in the first term of a new government. There is much work to be done but we are committed together, federal and state, to deliver better outcomes.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (11:54): I thought I would start with a quiz: 'Joe had three test scores, 78, 76 and 74, while Mary had scores of 72, 82 and 74. How did Joe's average compare with Mary's?' You are not responding immediately, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I am sure that the answer you have in your head, as other members do, is that both Joe and Mary have the same average. This question was asked on successive tests in Australia from 1964 to 2003. In 1964 88 per cent of students answered correctly; in 2003 just 68 per cent answered correctly. A fifth of students who were able to answer it in the 1960s could not answer it in the early 2000s.

Behind this motion are a truth and a falsehood. I want to focus on the truth first, that Australian literacy and numeracy performance has failed to rise over a very long run, a much longer time frame than even discussed in the motion. Work that Chris Ryan and I published in the journal Education Finance and Policy found a small but statistically significant fall in numeracy from 1964 to 2003 and in both literacy and numeracy from 1975 to 1998. Work that Chris Ryan published in the Economics of Education Review last year looked at the change in PISA scores from 2000 to 2012. It found that mathematical literacy fell at the top of the distribution and reading and literacy fell throughout it. It found that declines in school performance were most marked in private schools. Work that Chris Ryan and I have done on teacher aptitude, which was referred to by the mover of the motion, also found declines in literacy and numeracy of new teachers relative to those within the same class. From 1983 to 2003 the share of teachers in the top fifth of their class halved and the share of teachers in the bottom half of their class doubled.

That is the fundamental truth of this motion, but the falsehood is that money does not matter. To see that falsehood we know you need only look at the previous Liberal Party speaker's speech, where he finished by pledging an increase in funding on behalf of the Tasmanian Liberals in the next election. Money is not a guarantee of better outcomes but it is a necessary condition for better schools. That is why under Labor in government we not only brought down the Gonski review but also put in place national partnerships which see literacy and numeracy coaches in so many of Canberra's most disadvantaged schools. We put in place the My School website which those opposite had talked about for many years but had never been able to deliver. And we put in place unprecedented investment in school infrastructure, which has improved educational outcomes. For example, at Amaroo school in my electorate classroom partitions allow team teaching and allow teachers to share skills.
So nothing in the research body supports a broken funding system, a system which was always designed to be a temporary arrangement in the early 2000s but which was backed by the now education minister as recently as a year ago. The education minister has in the past described the Gonski report as 'conski', and it appears to me that he has not made his way through it. That is indicated by the strong focus on school reform that you see within the Gonski report itself. Chapter 5, Building Momentum for Change, includes sections focusing on the great teaching profession, empowered schools, developing and sustaining innovation and engaged parents. We need to focus on this suite of school reforms alongside fixing a broken funding system.

As Amanda Ripley notes in her new book, *The Smartest Kids in the World*, making education systems work is a confluence of factors. It requires great teachers, engaged parents and a funding system which supports school reform. All of those things were in place under the former government, and I am disappointed to see that the opposition is allowing states to take money out of schools as fast as the federal government puts it in, rather than making a guarantee that no school will be worse off under the National Plan for School Improvement.

Debate interrupted.

**BILLS**

*Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014*

*Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014*

*Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014*

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading the House notes that:

(1) the Government repeatedly stated before the election 'that if debt is the problem, more debt is not the answer';

(2) the 2013-14 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook showed a $17 billion blow-out in the 2013-14 budget deficit, which at the time represented a $167 million budget blow-out per day since the Government took office;

(3) 60 per cent of the predicted budget blow-out in 2013-14 was due to the decisions of the Government alone;

(4) the Government has sought to pave the way for deep cuts to the federal budget by deliberately blowing out the budget and establishing its Commission of Audit; and

(5) these cuts would be another example of this Government saying one thing before the election, and doing the complete opposite after it."

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent) (12:00): Order! Before the debate is resumed on this bill, I remind the House that it has been agreed that a general debate be allowed covering this bill, the Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014 and the Appropriation
Mr CONROY (Charlton) (12:00): When I was speaking on this bill previously, I was going through the $11½ million cut to the Building Multicultural Communities Program grants—a cut that could have been avoided using just 10 days of the interest bill from the government's nakedly political injection of $8.8 billion into the Reserve Bank Reserve Fund. As part of this cut to this grants program, we were seeing the Ethnic Communities Council of Newcastle and Hunter Region lose a $150,000 grant to build the first ever multicultural men's shed and a community garden at their community centre. Members from all sides of this House will be aware of the wonderful contribution that men's sheds provide to our community, and to have a multicultural men's shed was a truly innovative idea from the ethnic communities council. Ninety men had already registered to join this shed, and they have lost their $150,000 grant which was awarded in the previous government and fully budgeted for.

Given that the funding agreements for the program stated that the projects had to be completed by 30 June 2014, most organisations had begun the planning process, and many are now well advanced in their project and are considerably out of pocket. Vedic Samiti are out of pocket for more than $14,000 after undergoing a lengthy building design and development approval process, and the ethnic communities council has invested around $49,000 on plans, DA approvals, electrical works and site preparation. I am advised that on Tuesday, 25 February, the department called the ethnic communities council to advise they will reimburse $4,500 for costs associated with the lodgement of a development application to Newcastle council. However, they refused to acknowledge the more than $44,000 invested by the council in utilities fees, design, EISs and electrical work required to get the approval for the DA.

So these groups made the decision to invest in these projects in good faith; they had had their grants awarded, in accordance with the grants process; and now they are considerably out of pocket because of the actions of the Abbott government. These are groups that have very low budgets. They operate on a shoestring, often through the operation of goodwill and donations from the community. To see them out of pocket to such a great extent demonstrates the contempt this new government has for community groups.

I am sure that, like members on this side of the House, coalition MPs would have enjoyed attending citizenship ceremonies on Australia Day and welcoming our newest citizens. These ceremonies are wonderful demonstrations of our modern, multicultural Australia. I would just highlight the hypocrisy of this government: although they pay lip service to multiculturalism, they have in fact cut funding to the very groups that are on the ground making multiculturalism work.

In the time remaining, I would like to discuss another part of the appropriations bill, and that is defence funding. At the moment, we have the naval shipbuilding industry in crisis. The entire industry is in a crisis where they are waiting for work. Most of the shipyards in this country that build naval ships—Forgacs in the Hunter, and BAE at Williamstown and Henderson—are looking at work running out in the next year. We are looking at between 4,000 and 5,000 job losses if nothing is done, including 900 jobs going in my region of the Hunter Valley. Once lost, these jobs will be very hard to rebuild—and we will need to rebuild
them because, under the current white paper, the Royal Australian Navy will need to acquire 40 major naval vessels in the next couple of decades.

It is essential that we build most of these ships if not all of them here because there is a direct link between the ability to build a naval vessel and the ability to maintain them. As an island nation it is essential for our national sovereignty that we can maintain our own naval vessels so that we are not dependent on any other nation in the world.

Labor had a solution, and we took to the last election a proposal to bring forward the replacement of two supply ships and to guarantee a minimum amount of work being provided in Australia with a real opportunity for both ships to be built entirely within this country. This would have helped Forgacs and it would have helped BAE, who would have had to compete for the work but would have had a decent shot at overcoming the shipbuilding valley of death that they currently face.

There are other options, including building a fourth air warfare destroyer, advancing the replacement of the patrol boats that have seen some operational maintenance difficulties, or beginning early construction of our frigate replacements based on a hull modelled on the AWD. All of these options are worth exploring, but we need urgent work to resolve this issue.

If these shipyards, most particularly BAE in Melbourne and Forgacs up at Tomago, do not receive the opportunity to bid for new contracts shortly, they will have to start making workers redundant, and this will lead to 4,000 to 5,000 direct job losses and the impact on families and communities, not to mention the impact on other communities that depend on that work, whether those are steel suppliers or other specialty subcontractors.

This will be not only an economic and social impact; it will be an impact on our national defence. Once these jobs are lost, they will be very hard to rebuild and, as an island nation, this will be a great tragedy that will reduce our national sovereignty. So I urge the new government to find a solution quickly on this. They were briefed on this when they were in opposition. There should be a bipartisan approach. No-one wants to score political points on this. We need a solution; otherwise, we will see thousands of jobs going, devastating communities that have already seen significant job losses, whether it is in the Hunter Valley or in Melbourne, where they saw the loss of Toyota and other industries from that region.

I urge the new government to take action on this. I will be working very closely with the employers, the unions and the workforce in my area. I have already talked to Mr Lindsay Stratton, the CEO of Forgacs, a few times about this issue, and I have spoken to the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, which represents the workers on this site. This is an important issue. I urge the government to take action, not sit on their hands and wait for a new white-paper process. We need an urgent resolution now, or we will lose thousands of jobs and face a reduced national capability.

This appropriations bill contains a number of initiatives. Some of them are nakedly political, like the $8.8 billion injection into the Reserve Bank in one year, which will see dividends paid only six weeks later back to the government. It yet again demonstrates the skewed priorities of this government. It is all about superficial politics, not acting in our national interest.

Mr HOGAN (Page) (12:08): I rise to speak in favour of Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments)
Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014 and against the opposition amendment. Can I just take the point that
the member for Chifley just raised in relation to—

Mr Conroy: Charlton!

Mr HOGAN: Sorry, Charlton. Sorry, Member for Charlton; apologies to the member for
Chifley. On the point about the $8.8 billion for the one-off grant to the RBA: I have the
privilege of being on the Standing Committee on Economics, and we had the Governor of the
Reserve Bank come to a meeting in late December. There was much toing and froing about
this from different members of the committee. It sounded to me as though there was almost a
conspiracy feel about this according to members of the opposition. But I asked the governor a
question. I said, 'Do you think it is a good thing or a bad thing, Governor, that this $8.8 billion
grant be given to the RBA?' His exact words were, 'This is something that I welcome because
it restores the capital position of the bank to where I would like it to be.' So, while we may
make much toing and froing about who said what to whom, who made what phone call on
what day or who said what to whom in the meeting, his response to that was that he welcomes
it. He appreciates, probably more than anyone else, even anyone in this House, the importance
of the Reserve Bank's capital position and that it be reinstated as quickly as possible due to
the role that that reserve plays due to foreign currency fluctuations and everything else that
the RBA needs it for.

Another part of this appropriation legislation obviously is for the Department of
Immigration and Border Protection. This debate I think is sometimes lost in the debate that we
have in the public and in the media about this. When we talk about people seeking asylum in
Australia, sometimes it is forgotten and sometimes it is lost that there is bipartisan support for
Australia—given that we are a relatively wealthy country—to take in asylum seekers every
year, and in fact we do. We take in 13,750 asylum seekers each and every year. Not only do
we take them in; we make sure that we look after them to help their settlement into Australia.
We do that through a variety of programs. We do it through housing programs and education
programs. We do it in many other ways to make sure that they are not just left by themselves
but find their transition into life in Australia as easy as we can make it.

That is why we cap the program. We do not take in hundreds of thousands of asylum
seekers every year. Some countries have many more asylum seekers arriving on their shores
every year, but those countries tend not to do anything for them. They just leave them by
themselves. They do not have any rights, and they are certainly not given government
assistance. That is not the Australian way. When we take in our asylum seekers, we want to
look after them, which is why we cap the program at the 13,000 to 14,000 that we do.

The approach that we have taken to this has been in the context of a very highly and
emotionally charged debate. I appreciate the passions on either side of this because I think
that behind both sides of this argument there are good intentions and there is goodwill, in the
sense that we get this right. In my mind, I look back at the statistics. I look back at what was
happening at the end of the Howard government era. At the end of the Howard government, I
think there was a detention centre that had three or four people in it. And it is important to
remember that, while we only had three or four people in a detention centre, we were still
taking in 13,750 people each year—as we should—and we were housing them and giving
them education programs and language programs to help them settle. So, while the detention
centres had closed, we were still taking in asylum seekers.
What happened? I will give some credit to the Rudd government maybe that their intention was good. When the Rudd government came in, they thought that the policies—and we know what they were; they were temporary protection visas, offshore processing and turning back boats if and when it was safe to do so—were harsh. They felt that the image of that to the international community or even the Australian community was too harsh. Let us assume for a second that their intention behind changing that policy was admirable, but let us look at the results.

The results were that the people-smuggling business started up again. This is a tragedy. I certainly do not want to sound political about this, but I am just stating the fact. The tragedy was that obviously we saw many drownings and deaths at sea because the people-smuggling business started up again. And we certainly had a lot of cost blow-outs again when we had to start to reopen detention centres, and we had a whole process that the previous government had to start to pre-empt. I stand here and I think that we all want the same result in some ways in this country about this issue, in the sense that we do not want detention centres. Obviously the whole purpose of having offshore processing is to deter so that there is no demand for that. Again we see the government's policies. It is part of this appropriation bill that the policy we are implementing in relation to immigration and border protection is a good one.

When I look at appropriation bills, I look more broadly and see that these bills are always about economic management. You look younger than I, Deputy Speaker, so you might not remember as far back as I do. My first memories of economic management were the Whitlam days. At that stage, the Labor Party had not been in power for a long time so I think you can excuse some of their mismanagement, but we had a bit of chaos with them. We had the Khemlani loans affair and things happening, as far as economic management goes, that did not suit our country well. With the next Labor government, we had Hawke and Keating. Let us give credit where credit is due: certainly, as Treasurer, Paul Keating implemented some policies that he and the country should be quite happy with. But we also had the recession that we had to have, according to him. We had 18 per cent interest rates. Very tellingly, we were again left with a $96 billion debt.

I want to come to debt in a minute, given we are talking appropriation bills. Let us assume we are looking at this from a distance. The Howard-Costello government came in and they paid back all of that debt. The $96 billion was completely repaid. They put $50 billion into the Future Fund, which was unfunded superannuation liabilities we had for public servants. To have given those public servants security about their superannuation is a wonderful thing. It is well documented, as you know, that in that government's last year alone we were left a $20 billion surplus.

We then get the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government. Everyone in that government would have observed the Whitlam experiment. They saw what Hawke and Keating did—that they did some good things but left us with a big debt. They saw the good economic management of the Howard-Costello years. What did they learn from that? What did the Rudd-Gillard government that learn from that? It would seem not much, because unfortunately we had the six biggest deficits in the history of our country. We had a global financial crisis during that period and there were certainly some elements where you could say that government needed to step in and do some things. I do not think anybody argued with that. But we would say
again that some of those were mismanaged. I will not list them all, but some of the more obvious ones are the batts and the overpriced school halls. We have had some examples with the NBN rollout, where it looks like there has again been very wasteful spending.

But what does this mean? If you are the average punter, or the average mum and dad in the street, what does this mean? These deficits or debts, what do they mean for you? Is it an issue for you? It is—because the issue is that now, because of those six years, we have an interest bill. We all have mortgages or run a business and so we know what this means. We have an interest bill of $10 billion a year.

We stand in this House right now, and I have heard people from the opposition talk about this terrible stuff that is going on with things that the member was talking about previously—cuts, or being tough on multicultural programs. No-one wants to do that. No-one wants to be in government and say to a program, 'We are not going to give you as much money as we previously did.' But imagine if we had not had the six years of the Labor government and, now, the $10 billion a year we are paying in interest. Imagine how much better life would be for everyone in this country. This year we are paying $10 billion in interest, for which we will get nothing. We will get nothing: no service, no money to Gonski, no money for the NDIS, no money to the multicultural programs that the previous member was speaking about. This is $10 billion in interest which will just go to the people who we borrowed the money from. Then what happens? Next year, again, the same thing happens. Again we will have a huge interest bill. Again money will not go to infrastructure. We would love to have the money for infrastructure. Money will not be going to government programs or to very worthy causes.

Here we are in 2014, with the biggest debt in our history. We are overregulated and it is expensive to do business in this country. This is what the challenge is for the new coalition government: to get us back on track again and put our budget and our finances in a financially-sustainable position. Members on the other side are often very righteous about children and say that we need education and programs or services for our children, and rightly so. But the other thing that our children do not deserve is to be left a debt and an interest bill that will mean their standard of living and the services they get for themselves and their children is less than ours. That is the challenge for this new government. We know the budget repair work has already begun. We know that the reduction of red tape has already begun.

Interestingly enough, after the election I was talking to my community. They were coming to me about lowering red tape. I thought it would be predominantly small business. It is, but guess who else is in my office? Guess who else is talking to me as I walk around the community? It is not just a small business. It is non-government organisations and not-for-profit organisations; in fact, it is often members of the public sector themselves. I have had examples of schoolteachers stopping me at sporting events and saying, 'I have had to fill out eight pages in a risk assessment to walk my kids two blocks to get them here, or for this or for that.' That, too, is an example of wasted time and wasted resources. We all in this chamber come here with good intentions. We want the best for our children. We want the best for people in our community who are disadvantaged and we want the best for everyone now and in the future.

I want to recap on three important issues from these appropriation bills. One is the $8.8 billion grant. I reiterate: the Governor of the Reserve Bank said he welcomed it. I spoke about the border protection element of this appropriation bill too. I said that everyone in this country
welcomes the 13,000 to 14,000 asylum seekers who come every year in an orderly way and who do not risk their lives. We look after them when they get here. We give them education, language and housing programs to make them assimilate. I know that this government—with the economic mismanagement that we have seen over the last six years, which has given us a $10 billion interest bill that does not go to any services or any infrastructure—will undergo a budget repair bill that puts our country's finances back in order so that our children and our children's children are not left with a Labor legacy of debt and a lower standard of living.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (12:22): Before the election, the coalition said: 'If debt is the problem, more debt is not the answer.' Obviously, we have seen a change of heart since the election. In fact, we have probably seen the truth of where the Abbott government really stands when it came to the question of debt. Before the election, we also saw the coalition in this place, time after time, criticise the previous government for negotiating with and talking to members of the minor parties, including the Greens. They were particularly critical of the previous government's 'wheeling and dealing', as they put it, with the Greens. But, again, since coming to office, we have seen the Abbott government, immediately they have a problem, jump into bed with the Greens and get their support to increase or do away with the debt ceiling—another clear example of the government having said one thing before the election and acting completely differently after they have been elected.

They needed to increase the debt ceiling for, I think, two key reasons. Firstly, on coming to government they found that it is about more than just giving the community three- or four-word slogans and simple political rhetoric; it is about managing the economy. They have proven that they are incompetent at managing the economy. So, one of the reasons they have to increase their debt ceiling is that they know that, under the Abbott government, debt is going to rise.

Secondly, it is clear that the Abbott government's policies are in fact destroying confidence in Australia's future. Earlier on, when I was speaking on another matter in this place, I talked about confidence in Australia's future being destroyed and quoted a headline from The Australian of last Friday: 'Worst slump in 20 years hits jobs'. This article talks about confidence over the coming period—not in the past or today, but in the coming period. It is clear that Australian industry and the Australian people are losing faith and confidence in this government.

Why wouldn't you lose confidence in this government? After all, they come in here with one view one day and a different view the next. Let me give some examples of that. When it suits the Abbott government, they are all in favour of foreign investment. Yet, when it does not suit them, they are opposed to it. We saw that with the GrainCorp sale. On one hand, they did not support that; on the other hand, they come into this place and talk about selling off Qantas. One day they are in favour of foreign investment; the next day they are against it.

We saw the same with industry support. They were opposed to industry support when it came to SPC Ardmona and the motor vehicle building industry in this country, but they were happy to give out $16 million to Cadbury. They support industry one day; they are opposed to supporting it the next. One day they are critical of government debt and then, the next day, they unnecessarily add to government debt by providing an additional $8.8 billion to the Reserve Bank, without any justification and without any request from the bank, to my knowledge, for that $8.8 billion. They were happy to increase the debt when they did not have
to. It was the same with education. Before the election, the coalition was at one with Labor over Gonski funding. After the election, we saw a backflip. Everything is now off the table and the government are renegotiating their education funding. They are doing a terrible job of that, and I can say that having spoken to people in the education system in my home state.

All of that undoubtedly leads to a lack of confidence. We have seen that lack of confidence across a whole range of sectors, in particular the mining sector and the manufacturing sector. The article I referred to from *The Australian*, 'Worst slump in 20 years hits jobs', specifically talks about the future of manufacturing and mining in this country and the downward trend that is expected in those two sectors—both sectors that have been, to date, critical in underpinning the economy of Australia. Manufacturing is expected to fall by another 20 per cent over the coming year, and mining by a further 25 per cent. In fact, I have seen reports that tens of thousands of jobs are expected to be lost in the mining sector over the coming years. Again, it does not say much for the Abbott government when industry are making decisions based on expectations that things are going to get worse—a clear lack of confidence in this government.

Because there is a lack of confidence in the government, it is not surprising that there is also a blowing-out of government debt. That is why the Abbott government needed to lift its debt ceiling—because of their policies and their incompetence. The Abbott government's policies are directly adding to the national debt. The argument of the Abbott government in constantly blaming the previous government is wearing thin with the Australian people. They are waking up to the inability and incompetence of this government.

When industries close, government tax revenue also falls. When unemployment rises, government expenditure also rises. When government program funding is severely cut, economic activity declines. The effects of severe austerity measures, as seen in some European countries and some parts of the USA, are now evident for us to learn from. Clearly, they do not work. What you get as a result of severe austerity measures are higher unemployment, worsening economies, worsening business confidence, more bankruptcies and, ultimately, less government revenue. Again, that all means higher government debt. Conservative governments then start the cycle all over again and it becomes a downward spiral for those economies where conservative governments have applied severe austerity measures.

This is a matter that was very well articulated only two weeks ago at a forum at Adelaide university held by three or four academics, who had spent their time studying the effects of austerity measures across Europe and the USA. I understand that the notes and discussion from that forum can be downloaded. For those who attended, and I was one of them, it is quite concerning to see the negative effects that severe austerity measures have on the people of those countries, and how they simply do not work. What they really do is make situations worse, add to the economic difficulties of the countries involved and make tough economic times even worse.

There is another motive behind the rhetoric used by the Abbott government when it comes to making what they call the tough decisions that they need to make. Making tough economic decisions, as they put it, is nothing more than a convenient excuse by the Abbott government to attack workers, their wages and their conditions. That is exactly what the Abbott government are doing. We saw an appalling example of that when they attacked the workers
at SPC Ardmona in Victoria. When you look at the facts of what those workers were earning, at the attacks that were made and the blame that was sheeted home to the workers for the difficulties at SPC Ardmona, it is really quite appalling. Those workers were not being paid any more than basic wages. In fact, I would like to see government members in this place suggest that they would like to be earning the sort of money that those workers earn. I am sure that they would not, yet they are happy to come into this place and criticise those workers.

It does not stop with the workers at SPC Ardmona. We saw the same attacks on the workers of this country when it came to the difficulties that GMH have been facing, that Toyota have been facing, and that Qantas have been facing. The Abbott government always blame the workers. Making the so-called tough decisions is a convenient excuse to attack the workers of this country and, in so doing, to start to bring down their wages and their conditions. Under this government, we have seen a loss of some 63,000 jobs since it came to office. We have seen jobs lost at SPC Ardmona. We will see the motor manufacturing industry come to an end in 2017, if not before. I suspect that as a result of decisions that have already been taken many of those companies will start winding down before that. We have seen jobs lost in a swag of other industries like Electrolux, Simplot, Caterpillar, Peabody and so on. All those job losses will result in a worsening budget outlook.

I want to comment on one of the other excuses we often hear from the government for the state of the economy—that is, the carbon tax. Only today I heard a government member suggesting that the reason Qantas are in trouble is the carbon tax bill. If that is what the government truly believe, the government always has the option of returning the carbon tax bill back to Qantas by way of a direct grant, a loan, a loan guarantee or a combination of all three. It is within the power of the government to act if it really believes the carbon tax is the cause of the problems at Qantas. The truth is that it is not and the government knows it, and that is why it will not act. It hides behind the excuse that the Labor opposition are standing in the way of the repeal of the carbon tax.

The government talks a lot about sound economic management, but in truth it has no answers and no policies. It is the government's policies that are actually damaging the bottom line of the budget. I want to talk about one of those policies which has not been clearly articulated when it comes to the loss of car-making in this country. When that industry is lost, Australia will lose about $3 billion in exports. It will also import an additional 100,000-odd cars a year, based on today's figures. What do members opposite think that will do to the balance of trade for this country and the budget bottom line? It will have a negative impact on it. But, again, have members opposite and the government considered those outcomes when they talk about their refusal to support industry in this country? They are critical of government debt, critical of the balance of payments and critical of debt generally, but their policies are going to add to the debt figure.

I have talked about some of the jobs that have already been lost, but it goes further than that. This is about the government rhetoric that the budget is in a mess, that we have massive debt and that the government have to fix it. It is a narrative that has been deliberately exaggerated for blatant political purposes. It has been exaggerated to cover their incompetence; to justify the harsh cuts that they will not talk about but which their Commission of Audit will undoubtedly recommend for the May budget; to attack the workers of this country; to attack the unions and give themselves cover for doing that; and to justify
turning their backs on the environment and the environmental measures that were put in place by the previous government in order to create a balance between economic productivity and development and sound environmental management.

They run that narrative, exaggerating the budget position so that they can cut social outlays in this country—cuts to health, cuts to housing, cuts to education, cuts to disability support and so on. The worst of all, might I say, is the imposition of a GP tax of $6 every time someone visits a doctor. That, to me, scrapes the bottom of the barrel in terms of the desperation of this government: hitting people who need the most support at the time when they are looking after their health.

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (12:37): I am very pleased to be speaking today in favour of Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014 and cognate bills and against the amendment moved by the opposition. These appropriation bills represent one of the first steps for the government in cleaning up the very substantial mess we have been left with by the previous Labor government, and what a mess it is. It is a mess which has quite a wide range of aspects to it. One of the most critical parts of that mess is the debt situation which, unfortunately, our nation is now burdened with.

The previous government came in with no net debt and, in fact, with money in the bank, but we are faced with very substantial net debt of circa $200 billion. We also have a situation where that debt is set to grow substantially unless the government acts. The extraordinary thing is that, over the next four years of forward estimates, MYEFO has estimated that $123 billion of additional deficits will be added to what is already a very sore and sorry budgetary position—a very substantial addition to the debt we would face should we follow the policies of the previous government. Even worse, MYEFO forecasts that, over the next decade, if the budgetary position is not addressed, the debt of the Commonwealth by the end of that period would be some $667 billion—that is, two-thirds of a trillion dollars, a completely unacceptable situation.

Labor governments over a long period have not been able to balance the books. The last time a Labor government had a surplus budget was 1989—a very long time ago. Labor had deficits in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995 and then there were more deficits in the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd period in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. Had it happened occasionally, in maybe one or two years during a particularly difficult economic period, it might be understandable. A reasonable person might say that they can understand why it was necessary to temporarily go into deficit for one or two years, but that is not the situation which occurred under the previous government. What occurred under the previous government and under the one before that was structural ongoing deficit, an addiction to spending and an inability to spend less than revenue taken in. That is the simple nub of the issue. If you consistently spend more than you take in, you are going to get into trouble. That is the case for families, for small businesses in my electorate and right around the nation, and it is certainly the case for governments. Cleaning up that debt position is certainly one of the key tasks for this government.

How did this situation arise? However could it get that bad? One of the key areas where we saw a huge blow-out in expenditure under the last government was border protection, or the lack thereof. When the previous government came in, the border security policies of the Howard government were working very effectively. As the previous member mentioned, a
strong humanitarian program was in place and was being managed in an orderly fashion, and illegal boat arrivals had slowed to virtually none. The previous government said, 'Let's change what is working extremely well. Let's fundamentally dismantle a system which is serving the Australian people extremely well, and in the process let's spend billions and billions of dollars of borrowed money.' That is the sad reality of the previous government's border security policies, which saw a budget blow-out of more than $6 billion and spending of $11 billion or more.

There were many examples of this sort of policy on the run, lack of attention to detail and lack of understanding of how to manage programs in an operational sense. It is very easy to put out a press release. It does not take a long time. You type it up, you send it out and it is very simple. It is much harder to manage organisations effectively, especially organisations of the size and complexity of the federal government. Under the previous government we saw an addiction to the media cycle—to responding to the day's events—often in a way that was detrimental to the financial position of this country, feeding into the huge debt burden which we now face. A prime example of that was the decision in relation to live animal exports. The electorates of many members from your home state of Queensland, Deputy Speaker Vasta, and from other parts of the nation were affected very significantly by the former government's knee-jerk reaction, pretty much overnight, to abandon the live export industry. The extraordinary thing about that was the fact that it was such a harsh and ill-considered plan, taken so quickly, which had a huge negative impact on ordinary families right around the country, so much so that the previous government acknowledged their mistake and said, 'We'd better put together some sort of assistance package for these communities, which we've hit so hard with this poor policy.'

That assistance package cost about $100 million. If those opposite had not banned the industry overnight in such a superficial and shallow fashion, they would not then have had to spend $100 million trying to rescue it. It was a really relevant example of the lack of management expertise of the previous government. It was also a lack of financial acumen and a lack of respect for money, which was not only in evidence in the big programs such as the pink batts and the NBN—really a national joke under the Labor Party—but also in small programs that really give you an interesting and scary insight into the way the previous government used money.

One example of a lack of acumen was the spending on advertising of border protection policies prior to the last election. You might recall that there were very scary newspaper ads and gravelly intoned radio advertisements supposedly targeting people smugglers and encouraging them to not ply their trade but which were, oddly, aired in rural, regional and metropolitan Australia where people smugglers are not typically based. There was about a $2 million spend on that program. In the scheme of an enormous budget it was a relatively small amount of money but it tells you something very important about the attitude towards spending of the previous government. What it tells you is there was a lack of respect for those funds and a lack of appreciation of the fact the government does not generate income.

The government does not create economic activity; the government is simply the beneficiary of it through taxation. So all of that money that the government takes in has in fact been created by the hard work of Australian families and Australian businesses whether through pay-as-you-go tax, company tax or capital gains tax. Whatever the source of revenue,
the government did not do any of that work. The government did not work 40 or 50 hours a week having its tax taken out. The government did not take an entrepreneurial risk and employ people and really put its neck on the line to generate economic activity. The government did not do any of those things. The government was simply the beneficiary of that hard work. For the government to treat that money without respect was absolutely wrong.

It is a big task that we face. These appropriation bills represent one of the first steps in addressing it. There are some important steps that have already been taken by this government. So many projects were held up that the Minister for the Environment has given approvals for some $400-billion worth of environmental projects, infrastructure projects and the like. That means jobs in the creation of those projects and it also means ongoing economic benefit from the fact that those projects will exist.

Anyone who is in business, especially small business, does not like red tape. Frankly, if you are in business big or small, you have got better things to do than fill out forms for the government. You are worried about your business, you are worried about employing people and you are worried about paying the bills. The last thing you want to do at eight or nine o'clock at night when the day is done is get your HB pencil out and start filling in some forms for the government. Wherever we can minimise that regulatory burden, that is exactly what we should do.

The member for Kooyong has a tremendous initiative, 'repeal day', coming up soon when the government will be legislating to repeal more than 8,000 regulations—which is a particularly important initiative for the government. We have got to get rid of the carbon tax, of course. The carbon tax is causing such a drag on the economy at the moment. The comments of Mr Borghetti, the CEO of Virgin Australia, were well reported last week and demonstrated that the carbon tax has numerous impacts. One impact is the financial cost to the companies that have to pay it and to the households that have to pay higher electricity and other bills. The other impact is the contraction of economic activity which results from those additional costs. As in any business, if you have additional costs then that is a problem for you and you need to adjust your activities; perhaps cut back in a certain area or not do something you were planning on doing because you now have this additional cost. If that cost was not in place, it would not be necessary for such significant changes to have to occur. So getting rid of the carbon tax is absolutely fundamental and an important initiative for the government.

Free trade is a great driver of economic activity. The government has already got strong runs on the board with the South Korean free trade agreement, which will take tariffs off some 99.8 per cent of Australian products into South Korea. Importantly for my electorate of Banks, the government is working on a free trade agreement with the Republic of China. My electorate has the largest number of people of Chinese background of any electorate in Australia. There is a very warm and close relationship between my electorate and the people of China. We have many students here from China who are studying in our universities and colleges, and many businesses in my electorate work closely both in imports and exports with China and related markets. Free trade is an important part of the government's agenda and those discussions with China certainly will be of great benefit to my electorate.

These appropriation bills are an important first step in addressing the enormous mess that the Labor Party has left behind. It is incumbent on a new government to look honestly at the
situation, to look the Australian people in the eye when things are not right and say they are not right, and say we are going to put them right. As the Prime Minister and Treasurer said, not all of those decisions are easy. Not all of those initiatives are simple to take but they need to be taken because we cannot just sleepwalk into the future as the previous government was doing. We cannot just keep spending and spending like money is going out of fashion. We need to take an orderly and sensible approach to financial management. We need to make sure that when we spend a dollar of the people's we are asking ourselves: 'Is this a good use of their hard-earned funds? Is this something that needs to be done?' And, if it is not something that needs to be done, then it cannot be done.

Managing the budget carefully is absolutely critical. The fact that we are on track for a debt position of some two-thirds of a trillion dollars in 10 years if we do not change course is a frightening statistic. It is something we cannot allow to happen. It is certainly not something that this government will allow, because we will be making a number of important changes to get this country back on track, and passing these appropriations bills is an important step in that.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (12:53): I rise today to speak on the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014 and related bills and on Labor's worthy amendments.

I have listened to a number of my colleagues speak on these bills over the last week, and I must say it has left me with feelings of utter despair. It was despair I felt as my colleagues pointed out the gross hypocrisy and dishonesty of those opposite in their approach to spending—most evident in their blatantly political injection of $8.8 billion into the Reserve Bank. It was despair I felt as my colleagues detailed the cuts to health and education—a flagrant breach of the coalition's pre-election promises not to cut health or education. It was despair I felt when the Deputy Leader of the Opposition detailed the cuts this government is making within the foreign affairs and international development portfolio, cuts that are hurting those most in need in our very own region—in Asia and the Pacific—despite this government's promise to make our region the focus of its international development policy.

There are a number of aspects of these bills that I would like to speak about today. The first is the $13.2 million being ripped from the health portfolio in this financial year. I am not the only one who recalls that prior to the election those opposite promised no cuts to health. On the eve of the election—1 September 2013, to be exact—then opposition leader, now Prime Minister Tony Abbott, appearing on the ABC's Insiders program said:

And I want to give people this absolute assurance: no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no changes to pensions, and no changes to the GST.

But, since coming to power, the government's record in health has included: ripping $100 million from the Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital; abolishing the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council; backflipping on the promise not to close any Medicare Locals; abolishing the expert panel on the marketing of infant formula; and placing the jobs of departmental staff at risk and moving those awaiting redundancy to a permanent departure lounge. Based on its record so far, it would appear that the Abbott government has no vision for the health portfolio other than to make cuts.

I would like to talk today about one of the cuts that has already been inflicted. Last Friday, after 48 years of providing frank and fearless advice to policymakers, the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia closed its doors for good. This closure came after the Assistant
Minister for Health—the minister responsible for the preventative health of Australia—Minister Nash, inexplicably cut ADCA's funding late last year.

ADCA was the non-government national peak body representing the interests of the alcohol and other drugs sector. Established in 1966, it has provided a voice for those who work to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs for nearly half a century. ADCA was based in my electorate of Canberra, just a couple of kilometres from where we are right now, but it worked for the betterment of all Australians, as well as for our neighbours in Asia and the Pacific who can learn from our experience in this space.

Some of the services that had been provided by ADCA, which will now no longer be provided, include: National Drug Sector Information Service; the Register of Australian Drug and Alcohol Research; the National Inhalants Information Service; the drug database; Drugfields—a professional development, policy and practice information service for the Australian alcohol and drug sector; 'Update', an alcohol and other drugs information bulletin board; Drug Action Week, which is incredibly popular; 'Drug talk', an alcohol and other drugs discussion list; and, of course, their one-of-a-kind, incredible library of resources.

The decision to axe ADCA truly came out of the blue. Earlier last year, under the Labor government, ADCA received an assurance of its ongoing funding. And, on 14 October last year, Prime Minister Abbott wrote to ADCA and said, 'I look forward to working with you in the years ahead.' Just six weeks after the Prime Minister had written these words, ADCA was axed. Understandably, many have been wondering why.

Why, after nearly fifty years of representing the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector, is this the only government which has decided it does not need ADCA's advice? Is it because ADCA's support of the Australia 21 report on the prohibition of illicit drugs was too progressive for this conservative government? Is it an internal political decision we do not understand—given former Liberal MP the Hon. Dr Mal Washer is ADCA's president and former Liberal senator, Senator the Hon. Gary Humphries, was a director? Is it some form of payback, because ADCA have been critical of the NSW and QLD Liberal state governments' response to alcohol induced violence? Did it have anything to do with the reported links between Minister Nash's now former chief of staff and the alcohol industry? The fact is we will continue to wonder, because this government has not given a reason.

Minister Nash first said ADCA had a history of financial mismanagement—which was proved completely untrue. She then said the work of its incredible resource library was duplicated, only to retract that statement. This library is the only resource of its kind in the world and it would seem it is destined for the shredder.

With the many, many cuts being inflicted by this government, it is easy to lose perspective, so let me reintroduce some sorely needed perspective. The government has saved around $1.5 million in annual funding by cutting ADCA. The estimated cost of just one Australian living with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder over their lifetime can be up to $15 million. That is 10 times the annual budget of ADCA.

As the member for Canberra, I am concerned about the 14 ADCA staff who are my constituents and who have now lost their jobs. I am concerned about the landlord who has lost a tenant and the local businesses which will lose a client. But I am even more concerned about
the implications for the future health of our country and the region as a result of the axing of ADCA.

Another cut outlined in these bills that I would like to talk about today is the $11.5 million that has been ripped from the Building Multicultural Communities Program. The program provided one-off grants to empower local multicultural communities to strengthen social cohesion and promote inclusion in diverse communities. Some of the community groups in Canberra that received grants under the former Labor government included the ACT Jewish Community, the Australian Chinese Culture Exchange and Promotion Association, the Bangladeshi Seniors Club, the Canberra Islamic Centre and the Spanish Speakers Association.

When the government announced that they were cutting funding from this program, these organisations were left in limbo. Would they receive the grants that they had applied for months before the election? We all know that grassroots community organisations like these run on the smell of an oily rag. These grants were a much needed injection of funds that would reinvigorate their work, and for months these organisations have been in the dark. To date, of the 29 community groups that were awarded grants in the ACT, only two have received their funding. Many have been told they will not be receiving their funding at all but might be eligible for compensation. Many more are still in the dark.

As recently as two weeks ago I received a phone call from a representative of one of these organisations who had been told she would receive her grant. Even though she keeps being reassured that it is going to be okay, will this actually occur? The stress this was causing her was evident. The decisions of this government are hurting those individuals and groups in our community who give up their time to ensure we live in a better, more inclusive society.

The 2013-14 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook papers clearly show that $11.5 million is being taken out of this program. I quote from the MYEFO papers:

The Government will achieve savings of $11.5 million by not proceeding with funding for the Building Multicultural Communities programme, announced in 2013-14 Budget …

I am taking the time to point this out because, in defending this cut, Liberal senator for the ACT, Senator Seselja, has told the community groups who have lost their funding that the grants were never funded. He said:

They promised something they didn't have the money for. They didn't allocate the money for it.

He has repeated this claim again and again. He has accused Labor of handing out grants that there was no money for. I would like to say to Senator Seselja: if the money wasn't allocated, how are you able to make a $11.5 million saving by cutting the program? Senator Seselja has either been blatantly misleading the ACT community or he is too incompetent to read Labor's 2013-14 budget and the MYEFO document his own government prepared. Either way, he owes Canberrans an explanation.

So many of the cuts outlined in these bills have caused me concern, but perhaps what has caused me the most concern is the cuts to the Education portfolio. We all heard those opposite say before the election again and again that when it came to education they were on a unity ticket with Labor. Those are their words, not ours—a unity ticket. But following the election it is clear that nothing could be further from the truth.
Those opposite speak about the importance of vocational education in our schools. The Parliamentary Secretary for Education, Senator Ryan, has praised trade training centres for addressing skills shortages. He has also said that the government needs to consider 'innovative and practical approaches to deliver trade qualifications in schools'. The Assistant Minister for Education, the member for Farrer, has declared the importance of vocational education in schools, saying:

… there's not enough “try a trade” for those kids in school so they can see what it is they want to do.

She went on to say:

… what we need to do is make sure that from a pathway in say Year ten, they're directed into a career in the trade that suits them …

If those opposite really believe this, why have they cut an incredibly successful vocational education initiative in the trade training centres? In government, Labor funded 510 trades training centres in schools around Australia, with more than 60 per cent in regional areas.

I have visited the trade training centres in my electorate and I know what an incredibly valuable asset they are. I have visited the building and construction trade training centre at St Mary MacKillop College, where I spoke to students who have told me that they have stayed in school because of that trade training centre. I spoke to students who travel for over two hours every day from Cooma to Canberra so that they can go to school at MacKillop because of that trade training centre.

Just two weeks ago I visited Wanniassa High School, which had experienced severe flood damage as a result of the storms here in Canberra. While I was inspecting the damage, Principal Karen Nagorcka was most keen to show me their new trade training centre—still under construction—which had miraculously escaped the damage. I have visited the commercial kitchen trade training centre at St Clare's College, just down the road on Canberra Avenue, where students are able to commence their qualifications in hospitality without leaving school, so they can keep studying languages and English while gaining the qualifications they need for their chosen trade.

Now, more than ever, Australia needs to give every Australian student every opportunity to secure a high-skill, high-wage job of the future. The decision by the Abbott government to cut trade training centres is disgraceful and short-sighted. It shows that they have no understanding of the skills and qualifications that young Australians require for the future. It shows that they have no plan for jobs in Australia, because if they did they would understand the importance of trades. It shows that, despite the talk, those opposite do not care about vocational education.

Just days before the election, the now Prime Minister promised on national television that under an Abbott government there would be no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS. But here in these bills—the very first opportunity the Abbott government have had to present bills concerning money supply—we see cuts to health, cuts to education. We see broken promises. We see that this is not the government they promised to be. Before the election, Prime Minister Abbott promised he would lead a government of 'no surprises and no excuses'. Here are the surprises, clearly set out for us. I would like to know what his excuse is.
Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (13:07): In rising to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014 and cognate bills, I want to spend most of my time speaking about positive things and speaking about the future. To start with, I would like to centre my comments on the development of northern Australia. Truly one of the great moments in political life in Australia is when you have a Prime Minister who has the vision to stand up and say that, although there are 142 seats below the Tropic of Capricorn and there are only eight seats north of the Tropic of Capricorn, the country has to go to the north. What I want to see with the development of northern Australia is for us to get the development right—and, to get that right, we must work in partnership with science.

Cast your mind back to 2009 and the oil spill from the Montara oil rig in the Timor Sea. Green groups were up in arms afterwards about how they would ever find out what had gone on, the destruction of the environment and the damage that would go on for generations and generations. Before they commenced operations, the owners of the Montara oil rig had the foresight and vision to do a survey of the area in which they were going to drill. They grabbed the Institute of Marine Science, based in Townsville, to do a full survey of what was there. So when they did have the oil spill they were able to go through it afterwards and have a look at what damage was actually caused—and there was no damage.

We need to make sure that we have information to hand. If we are going to have development along our coastlines, if we are going to develop in places in the Timor Sea and the Torres Strait, and if we are going to expand our ports along the Queensland coastline, we must make sure that we engage with scientific organisations such as the Australian Institute of Marine Science and we get our baseline science and our mapping right so that we understand what is at stake, how it is going to be built, when it is going to be built and what the consequences of that will be. When talking about the environment I have always said that everything we do has an effect on the environment. The fact that we are in this place now speaking affects our environment. It is how we manage that effect which makes us the people we are. So we must handle that expansion and development of northern Australia in the right way.

If you ask anyone in Australia what the biggest river system is in this country, invariably people will say the Murray-Darling. That is the obvious answer, but it is in fact not correct. If we are truly to develop northern Australian, we must make sure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the Murray-Darling. We must make sure that we use the science correctly and speak to people like Dr Damien Burrows at JCU and the CSIRO in North Queensland. We have 25 river systems in the north of Queensland and we had the baseline science on about five of those river systems. The Murray-Darling starts in both the Snowy Mountains and in Queensland and it flows into the Great Australian Bight. In Queensland, we have river systems that not only flow into the Great Australian Bight but also flow into Lake Eyre, the Gulf of Carpentaria, the Great Barrier Reef and the Pacific Ocean. The Fitzroy and Burdekin river systems are two massive river systems, both carrying much more water than the Murray-Darling.

We must ensure that we understand what is going on. If we are to develop agriculture and the resources west of the Great Dividing Range, in places like the Gilbert River and all those places out west, we must ensure that we have our baseline science right. It would be pointless and sheer folly to replicate the mistakes that have been made over the last 200 years on the
Murray-Darling. It would be sheer folly to plant a $20 million mung bean crop if it was to destroy the billion dollar prawn fisheries of the Gulf of Carpentaria. We must make sure that we understand what we are dealing with here. When we are talking about the development of agriculture in the north of Australia, we must make sure that we understand the consequences of what the water is doing, how we are to store it, where it is to be stored and for what it is to be used.

I see the development of northern Australia as that key turning point in the north's future. I also see it as a fair bit of pressure on northern Australia and a fair bit of pressure on the members of parliament in the north of Australia. We have a Prime Minister who had the vision to actually put this forward, we have a Treasurer who understands where the country must go, we have a Minister for Trade and Investment who is actively out there pushing our case for us and we have a Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and Minister for Foreign Affairs saying that this is a great idea. There are four members of cabinet, at the very top, who are saying that this should happen. If we as the members of parliament for the north of Australia miss this opportunity, it will be gone forever. I see this as a huge opportunity for us, but it is also a huge risk. It is an opportunity that we must grab and we must be very aggressive with it.

In relation to the development of northern Australia, I feel that we must include our nearest neighbour, Port Moresby. The previous mayor of Townsville—the mayor of Townsville when I arrived in Townsville in 1994—Tony Mooney, would always say that the closest capital city to Townsville is not Brisbane but is in fact Port Moresby. Papua New Guinea and Port Moresby have been great friends of Australia for an awfully long time. It has been 72 years now since the battle of the Kokoda Trail and the fuzzy wuzzy angels. Papua New Guinea has been there for us for an awfully long time. Our relationship has ebbed and flowed. I truly believe that the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Peter O'Neill, wants the best for his country and wants our relationship to grow.

One of the issues that we have at the moment is the two-way visa issue between the two countries. Papua New Guinea is in the process of cancelling visas on arrival. What used to happen is that you would be able hop on a plane in Cairns and fly to Port Moresby and get your visa at Jackson Field airport on arrival. That does not happen for people from Papua New Guinea when they arrive in Australia. Mind you, it does not happen for any country. We do not have 'visa on arrival' for any country. But the perception is there that we are putting up roadblocks for people from Papua New Guinea—those who have business, education and cultural exchange work to do—to come to Australia. We must address that basic perception.

What we must do is make the process as simple as possible. If possible, we should create special categories of visa for people to do business, for people to do education and for people on cultural exchanges to make us an easier to get to country for them. The people you talk to in Papua New Guinea—from the Prime Minister to the previous Prime Minister, Sir Rabbie Namaliu, to people in business—will all sit there and say that they would do more in Australia but it was just too hard to get to. We must address the basic proposition that we are putting up roadblocks. I know that the foreign minister, Julie Bishop, is working very hard in relation to this process. What we must do is try to simplify the process, try to make it more online and try to make it more user friendly so that we can get to this country and exchange these things more easily.
I believe that Peter O'Neill is heading his country in the right direction. In a recent speech to the Institute of Company Directors on the Gold Coast, he spoke specifically about getting direct flights to Townsville. Whether we organise that as a direct flight or via Cairns is another thing. He also spoke about trying to get involved in the microeconomic form of business-to-business operations between the two countries, and specifically Townsville. I think that this is where we must go. If the relationship between the two countries is to grow, it must grow on a business-to-business basis. I think Prime Minister O'Neill has the bull by the horns here and has the right idea. We must be able to engage better between the two countries on a business-to-business basis, and I know that Townsville business and our Townsville Chamber of Commerce are working very hard to facilitate that.

Another pat on the back that you must give the Papua New Guinean government is for their attitude to corruption. Corruption is often spoken about as being a major issue between the two countries. Prime Minister O'Neill gave a recent speech to the governors of all provinces in Papua New Guinea and addressed the issue of corruption and how it must stop now that Papua New Guinea is on the cusp of a bright new age; that if they do not change the way they do their own business internally, they will never get the results that they should be getting internationally. If we can assist in any way, shape or form with the provision of the services that can assist with that, we should.

Townsville also stands on the cusp of being a major services hub. If you draw a right-angled triangle and have Townsville at the 90-degree axis, straight to the north of us is Papua New Guinea and straight to the east of us is Fiji. If you draw an arc from that 90-degree axis, you will basically get the entire Melanesian world within the circumference of that circle. You will get from Papua New Guinea to Bougainville to the Solomon Islands and around to Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji. Townsville can be the hub for services because we have a great university, a major teaching hospital, the defence force, a police academy, TAFE and Australian technical colleges. We have all these services already there. What we must be doing is facilitating the growth of those other countries by inviting them to come and participate fully in the use our facilities. Whether we do that by using our aid money for these countries or by them getting the aid money and purchasing services off Australian companies, be that as it may, what I do think we will do is get better results by using Townsville as that hub. That will mean that we will have to have people there from Austrade, the department of immigration and people from Foreign Affairs to get these things done, because we are the natural hub for business in northern Australia and we will need to make Townsville a truly international city.

In the time I have left in this debate I would like to discuss the work between the two countries at a defence level. The PNG defence force needs a lot of work and assistance. In Townsville we have the largest Army base in the country. We extend services and do joint operations with services from Papua New Guinea, but we could be doing a lot more. We could be doing exchanges and providing assistance in relation to how the PNG defence force is actually operating, their chains of command and the way they can set up a truly operational facility. What we need to be doing is getting more active in this space, getting in there and assisting them with that. It would be on invitation only, of course, but what we must be doing is looking at the best result for the Australian taxpayer across the board. If you look at where the two countries come closest in the Torres Strait, what we have to do is look at the most
effective use of taxpayer funded equipment by basing things such as the C27J or the MRH90 helicopter in Townsville and being able to use them for surveillance. That will also attract high-end engineering jobs, which will then attract the second-tier engineering jobs and those sorts of things to maximise the return for the taxpayer.

One of the criticisms I have of the previous government is that, in the rush to greater scale, they did not look at where the actual dollars were. They were neglecting saving the pennies and were just looking at the pounds. As my grandmother would always tell me, if you look after the pennies, the pounds will take care of themselves. We had situations where a contract had signed that everything would go down to Albury-Wodonga, to Bandiana, to be repaired and that they would get economies of scale and better results by sending stuff down there instead of getting the servicing done locally. How you get better economies of scale or better service by neglecting your local foundries and local engineering firms and instead putting a gearbox on a truck and sending it all the way to Albury-Wodonga to be repaired, or putting an engine on a pallet on a truck and taking it the 3,000 kilometres to Bandiana to have it rebored, then back on truck all the way back to Townsville, beggars belief. The Townsville business would produce better work at more affordable prices with a quicker turnaround and better use of the asset. This says so much about what was going wrong with the previous government.

What we must be doing is looking at how we maximise the benefit to the taxpayer and making sure that autonomy is given as close as possible to the relevant incident or occurrence. We can then get the best result for the Australian taxpayer. We must make sure we maximise those returns by shopping locally, by building the better relationships, by letting the bloke in the department who is heading up that section of the Army, Air Force or Navy go direct to his supplier and get it fixed locally, which means there will be a quicker turnaround for absolutely everyone. I thank the House.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:22): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate. I welcome it not because I am enthusiastic about the content of this bill but because I think it perfectly epitomises the actions and approach of the Abbott government to date. The bill before us is yet another example of their willingness to break promise after promise, yet another ideological attack on the central tenets of our society and yet another kick in the guts for every vulnerable Australian. It is what this government is all about. In just a few short months they have wreaked havoc. Take, for example, the first parliamentary sitting week of the year: in just seven days they managed to finish off the Australian car industry, blame affected workers for wanting wages and conditions, and then backtrack on their promise to deliver new jobs. I am sure they see it as quite the achievement. Broken promises, ideological attacks and hurting working Australians is this Liberal government's bread and butter.

So let us see what further pain they can inflict with these new appropriation bills. How about cutting $13.2 million from the Health portfolio, $4.8 million from education, $4.6 million from legal policy reform and advocacy funding, or $11.5 million from the Building Multicultural Communities program. They certainly have stayed true to form, with broken promise after broken promise. After all, this is the very same Prime Minister who said on the eve of the election that there would be 'no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS'. Let us break that down. Mr Abbott said there would be no cuts to education, a unity ticket: that did not last long. No cuts to health: obviously abolishing one of our oldest peak public health organisations does not
No changes to pensions: I am not sure what Mr Abbott thinks a welfare review is for, then. No GST changes: mobile home owners who fought against the government's tax hike might disagree. And no cuts to the ABC or SBS, just apparently an efficiency and expenses review. It is almost like a checklist of cuts to come, a checklist of broken promises, a checklist to mislead the Australian people. So much for a no surprises, no excuses government. The Abbott government has consistently said one thing before the election and then gone and done the complete opposite.

This is, after all, the party that said on multiple occasions that if debt is the problem then more debt is not the answer. What then did they do in government? They cut a deal with their avowed enemies, the Greens, to legislate for an unlimited debt ceiling—quite a backflip. And how many times did we see the current Prime Minister and Treasurer get to their feet in the lead-up to the election and claim Australia had a budget emergency? They claimed we were headed for disaster. I heard more of it today in this House. They claimed that only they could fix it. I guess they hoped that if they said it often enough it would become the truth, and when it did not they decided to change the rules. As the Secretary of the Department of Finance told Senate estimates recently, the Mid-Year Fiscal and Economic Outlook has discarded the former Labor government's fiscal rules which limited real spending growth. Mr David Tune confirmed that this change in assumptions had increased the outlook's projections of budget debt over the next 10 years. So the government changes the rules to suit its own purposes and then, lo and behold, uncovers a $667 billion debt figure in 2023-24. It is a disgraceful action by the Treasurer; it is deplorable. This willingness to fiddle with figures might also explain why the Treasurer decided to gift $9 billion to the Reserve Bank. It was an interesting choice, particularly given that there had been no indication that this was money they asked for or needed.

So why would the government do this? What reason could they possibly have to create and craft a bad result? It is because they are looking for excuses to cut health care, excuses to slash education and excuses to rip up important infrastructure and services around Australia. So obsessed are they with cutting, they are willing to distort the budget numbers in order to justify their ideological agenda. And we know from history that this is something those opposite do. They say, 'We can't afford it and it costs too much.' They attempt to dupe and deceive the Australian public in order to cut, cut, cut. But it flies in the face of logic that if we cannot afford vital health and education services we can somehow afford the coalition's exorbitant Paid Parental Leave scheme, or tax and superannuation breaks for some of our most wealthy. To put it simply, if we are broke, we should not be eating caviar. But the truth is we are not broke, it is just a question of priorities. So it seems that the health of our nation and the future of our kids, creating an equitable and welcoming society, none of this matters to the Abbott government; they simply do not care.

There is a fundamental disconnect between what Australian people want and what the Abbott government is delivering. After all, this is a government that relentlessly pursues inequity. It is a passion of theirs. It is in their bones. They govern for the big end of town while leaving the rest of us behind. We see it again and again. As my colleague the member for Throsby said last week, if you want a tax cut under this government then you had better own a mining company. At the same time as they reward big business they are cutting the schoolkids bonus. They are arguing that we cannot afford to help low-income earners with
their lifetime superannuation savings. They are saying that Australian workers like those at Toyota and Holden earn too much.

And if you need any more proof that this is a government that embraces inequality, look no further than their Gonski backflip with triple pike. It was those opposite that promised they shared a unity ticket with us on better schools funding. The Minister for Education pledged to us that he understood the importance of better and more equal education, but of course with this government promises and pledges mean little—in fact, zip. Despite their promises to the contrary, fundamentally, and buried deep within, this is a party that does not believe in funding education. Overcoming disadvantage, a fair go, creating equality—that is not what the Liberal Party are about. And now they are in government they no longer have to fool the Australian people, they are showing their true colours. They are pursuing their dreams of inequality and inequity. They are robbing from the poor to give to the rich. Yet this is the very same party that said they would govern for every Australian. I cannot recall how many times I saw a member of the coalition during the campaign with their Real Solutions pamphlet in hand. It contained, they claimed, the cure for every problem. It promised hope, reward and opportunity for everyone. But, as you can see, Mr Deputy Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The bill before us is yet another example which proves that the Prime Minister and the Treasurer govern for a minority, a small few with vested interests, and certainly not for everyday Australians.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour. The honourable member for Lalor will have leave to continue her remarks when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Atypical Haemolytic Uraemia Syndrome

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (13:30): I draw the House's attention to the inspirational story of Katherine Marshall and her family who live in my electorate. Katherine is 23 years old and has been fighting an extremely rare immune disease, atypical haemolytic uraemia syndrome or aHUS, since 2010. When I first met the Marshall family in 2012, Katherine was consigned to a life at home, besieged by constant fatigue and endless trips to the hospital.

Her family and physicians drew my urgent attention to Soliris, a drug produced by Alexion Pharmaceuticals. Alexion has been gracious in providing a compassionate access supply of Soliris to Katherine. The effect on Katherine was immediate and positive. In her father's, Gary's, words: 'She is a totally different girl now.'

Since then, the Marshall family have advocated for other aHUS sufferers, many of whom do not have compassionate access. They have established a support group and attracted national media about the need for aHUS sufferers to be covered for Soliris under the Life Saving Drugs Program. This support group has run a national petition calling on parliamentarians to support funding for Soliris through the Life Saving Drugs Program for sufferers of aHUS. More than 22,000 Australians signed the petition, which was tabled in the House earlier today. I want to commend their energy, compassion and sacrifice and to support their efforts in making sure that not only Katherine but other sufferers get access to Soliris.
Petition: Magnetic Resonance Imaging Licence for Mount Gambier

Mr PASIN (Barker) (13:32): I seek leave to provide to the House a petition calling for the federal government to grant an MRI licence for use in Mount Gambier. On Tuesday, 18 February, I had the great privilege of welcoming the federal Minister for Health to my home town of Mount Gambier, marking the first visit to Barker by a member of federal cabinet since last year's federal election. The visit included a well-attended public health forum at which about 80 local community members participated in a question and answer session with the minister. At the conclusion of the forum, Liberal candidate for Mount Gambier Troy Bell presented to me and the minister the petition that I have just provided to the House, calling on the federal government to grant an MRI licence to Mount Gambier. In recent months Mr Bell has collected some 3,500 signatures for the petition, and I congratulate him for his efforts. If given the privilege, he will make an exceptional representative for the people of Mount Gambier.

The minister's visit showed that members of the federal government, including members of cabinet, are keen to be as accessible as possible to members of the community. We are very grateful to the Minister for Health for spending time in Barker and participating in what is a vital ongoing discussion about the future of health in regional Australia. I was elected on the platform of supporting our health system in the electorate of Barker to ensure we meet current and future challenges and I am proud to be a member of the federal government because, through the diligence being shown by the Minister for Health, we are overseeing better investment and better healthcare outcomes for all regional Australians.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): The member for Barker said he was presenting a petition; Member for Barker, were you seeking leave?

Mr PASIN: I do seek leave.

Ms Macklin: I do not want to be difficult—because it is obviously a very important matter; I have just had a quick look at it—but, normally, it should go to the Petitions Committee. So maybe, Member for Barker, you would like to speak to them about it, but I am sure, once it goes through that process, it will be okay.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Jagajaga. Member for Barker, it will be forwarded to the Petitions Committee.

Kingsford Smith Electorate: First Hand Aboriginal Sunday Markets

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:34): Yesterday I had the great privilege of attending the inaugural Aboriginal markets and workshops at the historic Bare Island in our community. The markets are an initiative of the First Hand Solutions Aboriginal Corporation to raise funds for Aboriginal community youth programs and to revive La Perouse as a historic Aboriginal tourist destination.

Hundreds of locals and tourists joined local Bidjigal elders for a traditional smoking ceremony and dance performance to open the markets. Patrons then entered the historic island fort where the markets are situated. There were a number of stalls for people to visit. One of the stallholders was Laddie Timbery, whose family have been selling artefacts at the Loop at La Perouse for 188 years—surely one of the oldest businesses in Australia.

Workshops included spear making, basket weaving and shell design. There was plenty for the kids to do, with reptiles provided by the famous local Cann family—George Cann and his
son John were once the local snake men; they provided plenty of entertainment for the kids. The markets are on the first Sunday of every month at Bare Island from 9 am to 4 pm, and I encourage any visitors to Sydney to get down and visit this historic, significant event. I congratulate Peter Cooley, Sarah Martin and the board and volunteers of First Hand Solutions.

Heazlewood, Mr Ivan

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (13:35): Ivan Heazlewood, from Heazlewood's Lane at Whitemore in the north of my electorate of Lyons, has been an innovator in many agricultural fields, including cattle breeding and seed production. But it has been his work in maintaining and developing the stud British sheep breeds in Tasmania that sets this third-generation Whitemore farmer above the rest. His efforts were acknowledged when Mr Heazlewood, now in his 90th year, was made a Member of the Order of Australia on Australia Day this year.

Mr Heazlewood has served as a committee member of the Tasmanian branch of the Australian society of breeders of British sheep since 1960. He says that his passion for sheep and the people associated with the animals comes from being part of a family that has been breeding and showing sheep—including English Leicesters, Border Leicesters and Poll Dorsets—for more than 140 years. He has earned life membership of the Australian sheep breeders association, English Leicester Association and the Australian society of British sheep breeders as well as many others. He has been an industry leader in other areas, including serving as chairman of the Tasmanian pea growers, cereals and small seed and Tasmanian ryegrass marketing association.

Mr Heazlewood has become well known nationally for his writings on the animals and people associated with his beloved British sheep breeds. His two main publications have been *Old sheep for new pastures*, published in 1992, and *From the sheep pen*, published in 2012. *From the sheep pen* was a compilation of the best of many short articles he had written over more than 20 years for the Australian British sheep breeders society's publications several times a year. He is officially retired but still takes responsibility for nine lambs which he is preparing for a showing career.

Iramoo Primary School

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:37): Last week I had the opportunity to again visit the very impressive Iramoo Primary School, in Wyndham Vale, named after the Wurundjeri people's word for the stretch of land upon which my electorate is situated. I was there to stand with Principal Moira Findlay and congratulate the newly announced school leadership team. It included school captains Tevita Sopu and Courtney Wenlock as well as vice-captains Jacob Bowen and Lisa Gill. I was there to wish them well in their roles.

It was great to see family and friends attending. One mother, Lesieli Sopu, was particularly proud, as her three boys, Tevita, Andrew and Isikeli, were appointed school captain, house captain and flag raiser. The smile on her face made my week.

The flag ceremony at Iramoo Primary School is treated with great respect, and the flag raiser role is an important one. Along with the blue ensign, the school will variously raise the Torres Strait Islander flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Victorian state flag. I really enjoyed the national anthem played by the band and sung—both verses—by the student body. I was also able to visit the grade 5 literacy group, who were working on narratives and sizzling starts.
It is a great privilege to visit local schools to encourage students in their civics and citizenship and to acknowledge great leaders, already, in grade 6.

**Bowman Electorate: BoysTown**

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:38): In commending the work of BoysTown in my electorate, I want to acknowledge the thousands of young people who have gone through that program already and in particular their work in south-eastern Brisbane, which, in my state of Queensland, is probably the area of greatest need. For the young people who live in Bowman in particular who have led lives that many of us in this chamber cannot even imagine—complex, difficult lives—and who are looking for some direction, motivation and confidence, BoysTown is often the only option. For those kids who are dropping out of school, we know that retaining them can make a massive difference in those years between the ages of, say, 12 and 18 and can get them back on track with training and work.

John Perry does an amazing job in the area, as does Kate McKell, who looks after much of their work. It was an honour to run into the Hon. John McKell there as well when the young guys doing the Youth Connections work cooked me a delicious cake—which I think would have even inspired my wife to try a little harder! The cream cake was sensational. My staff were there and enjoyed the hospitality.

I want to say, in conclusion, thank you to BoysTown and to John Perry. I encourage you in your work to inspire more people to become mentors, because only through mentors, everyday people in the community who reach out and help young people, can we create a bridge for that difficult stage in life and on to a successful adulthood.

**Killesteyn, Mr Ed**

Mr GRAY (Brand) (13:40): I rise to thank Mr Ed Killesteyn for many years of distinguished service, recently to the AEC but also to the great institution of the Australian Public Service. In my time as Special Minister of State I was continually impressed by Mr Killesteyn's integrity and impartiality. I regret that during his final months in office others were not able to recognise those qualities too.

I know that the additional scrutiny placed on the AEC following the WA election result created a high degree of stress for Mr Killesteyn and his colleagues. Things were said publicly which probity and protocol prevented Mr Killesteyn from answering. I commend Mr Killesteyn on his impartial and dignified stance, and I commend him on the role that he played in ensuring openness and transparency throughout a difficult post-election period. I hail his courage in creating a proper process to resolve the impasse through the Court of Disputed Returns.

I expected that Mr Killesteyn would retire from the AEC within this term as commissioner, and I would be disappointed if he felt that his decision to resign was not his own. Mr Killesteyn's many years of impeccable service will not be forgotten by those who worked with him and by Australians who benefit from a sound Public Service and the quiet, competent, impartial work of men and women like him. Mr Killesteyn's family and loved ones will have felt the pain of the last few months. I regret this pain, and I wish him and his loved ones well.

Domestically and internationally, the AEC grew under the leadership of Mr Killesteyn. It was innovative, efficient and effective. In Africa, Asia and in the Pacific, the AEC spread its
wings. This is a tribute to Mr Killesteyn's sense of responsibility, service and democracy. I wish Mr Killesteyn and the terrific employees of the AEC every success in the future.

**Cure, Ms Amy**

**Mr WHITELEY** (Braddon) (13:41): Last week I was talking about gold medals for award-winning cheese in my electorate of Braddon. Wait; there is more! Last weekend, Braddon's golden girl, Amy Cure—I am so proud—won gold at the track-cycling world championships in Colombia. This is Amy's maiden senior world title. This was her third podium appearance in three days after Amy also took out bronze in both the team and the individual pursuit events.

I first met Amy when she was a bright, bubbly little girl, when I would visit her family church. It was fairly evident to me at that time that she was a determined little individual. Amy's cycling career began in May 2005 when Amy and her sister Sarah joined a cycling group in Ulverstone and later became members of the Mersey Valley Devonport Cycling Club. Amy and Sarah shared an equal talent and commitment to the sport of cycling. Sadly, Sarah's sporting career was shot down through serious accidents and subsequent injuries.

In 2006 Amy began training with Darryn Pugh, and she has also been working really hard in preparation for the Commonwealth Games. Proud parents Graeme and Delwyn have been dedicated and passionate about Amy's potential, and they can stand proud and tall today. Amy has a huge career ahead of her, spending most of her time now riding in Europe, and in July I am sure she will join the Australian team to prepare for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. Glasgow had better look out: Braddon's Amy is on her way! Amy, on behalf of a proud region: we are awe of your achievement.

**Parramatta Electorate: Evocca College**

**Ms OWENS** (Parramatta) (13:43): In Parramatta just over one in four people, about 26 per cent, of those enrolled in an educational institution are attending a tertiary or a technical institute. That is well above the national average of 21.6 per cent. In fact, across Parramatta, 14,000 people attend a tertiary or a technical institution. Two hundred and thirty-eight of those 14,000 students attend the newest kid on the block, Evocca College, which opened its new building, its new home in Parramatta, on Friday.

To call Evocca the new kid on the block is perhaps unfair. It does have campuses all across Australia, and it is in fact one of the few nationally accredited registered training organisations that is qualified to offer VET FEE-HELP. As a great new addition to Parramatta that sits alongside a number of other very good training colleges and of course our quite wonderful Granville TAFE, it is very welcome in the electorate of Parramatta.

I thank Auntie Donna for a great welcome to country to welcome them to our home in Parramatta; Vickie Sweeney, who is the branch manager, who gave us all a very warm welcome; and of course Roger Byrne, from the local chamber of commerce, who attended as well. But particularly I say thank you to the many students of Evocca College who turned up that day to say hello and to see the official opening of a great addition to Parramatta.

**Ryan Electorate: Community Service Awards**

**Mrs PRENTICE** (Ryan) (13:44): I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the many volunteers in my electorate of Ryan. As a driving force in our community, these
volunteers work without thought of reward or recognition. Today I wish to acknowledge two recipients of the Ryan Community Service Award.

Mr Les Schroder has long been involved in the Ryan community through the Brisbane West Crime Stoppers organisation, from its establishment; the Indooroopilly Neighbourhood Watch group; the Kenmore Community Consultative Committee; and the Kenmore 91 Probus Club, along with many other community organisations. Mr Schroder is a dedicated, hardworking individual who never seeks accolades and indeed was shocked when he received his award at the annual Crime Stoppers Thank You Day, another event for which he was a driving force and organiser.

Another worthy constituent I wish to recognise is Mr Richard Francis. Mr Francis is a hardworking member of the Ryan community through his involvement in the Men's Shed, playing a major role in the establishment of Shed West, Kenmore, which aims to provide a safe, welcoming and creative environment for men to pursue a wide range of interests and activities, from woodworking to computing. Also an active and valued member of the Probus Club of Brisbane West, Richard is another striking example of the hardworking community members in the electorate of Ryan whom I am honoured to represent.

Canberra

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:46): Today all of Australia has found out what we Canberrans have always known—Canberra is Australia's most liveable city. The results of Auspoll's annual survey My city: the people's verdict were released today, and Canberra has come out on top. The survey asked over 5,000 Australians in every capital city, as well as Wollongong and Newcastle, to rank their city against a set of 17 attributes. Canberra shone when it came to plentiful outdoor recreational spaces, a clean city with low pollution, a safe city and a city with access to good health care, good schools and good universities. Today I invite all those Australians outside of Canberra to come and experience Canberra for yourselves. This really is a great place to live, and Canberrans are rightfully proud of our beloved city.

The report also highlights that housing affordability remains an issue for Canberra, and the Property Council has called on the ACT government to think more creatively about how to increase the supply of homes. My electorate office is in Tuggeranong, where at the moment we have a number of empty office buildings in the town centre. One way we could be more creative in terms of housing supply is to look at how commercial space can be turned into residential space. In the case of Tuggeranong, this would not only increase the supply of affordable housing but enliven the Tuggeranong town centre. I look forward to taking up this issue with the ACT government.

Banks Electorate: Local Sporting Champions Grants

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (13:47): I rise today to congratulate the Banks recipients in the Local Sporting Champions grants program, which allows for $500 grants towards participation in a state, national or international sporting championship. In particular, I would like to congratulate a number of young people who have been successful in my electorate: Matthew Dufy of Peakhurst, who represented the New South Wales CCC at the National Touch League championships; Kate Gallagher of Penshurst, who represented Santa Sabina College at the Australian Volleyball Schools Cup; Chlo Plazandin of Peakhurst, a gymnast
who trains at Oatley RSL Youth Club and competed at the Sport Aerobics Nationals; Jason
Un of Padstow, who competed at the Australian Junior Table Tennis Championships;
Deborah Greenbaum of Blakehurst, who competed at the Australian Aerobic Gymnastics
Championships; Emma Jackson of Revesby, who represented NSW in baton twirling at the
national championships; and Isabella Yan of Allawah, who competed in the Australian Figure
Skating Championships. All these young people bring great credit to themselves, to their
families and to Banks more generally. I would also like to thank my assessment panel for
assisting in making these funding decisions: Ray Barbi, Linda Free, John Meredith and
Christine Butters. Their assistance in selecting these winners was a great help to me and I
thank them for it.

Cooper, Mr Chris

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (13:49): On Oscars Day, I rise today to mention the
outstanding work of my constituent, Lalor Park father of three Chris Cooper, who has been
recognised by the US Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Scientific and Technical
Awards, held on 15 February in Beverly Hills. This means that—as far as I am aware at this
time of the day—unlike Cate Blanchett and Leonardo DiCaprio, Chris has already taken home
an award this year. Chris was in a category of winners for which the award and citation from
the academy read as follows:

… for the development, prototyping and promotion of technologies and workflows for deep
compositing.

Their contributions include early advancements in key deep compositing features such as layer and
holdout-order independence, spatial and intra-element color correction, post-render depth of field, and
precise blending of complex layer edges.

In layperson's terms, that means: a visual effects software program that allows image pixels to
contain multiple samples of data instead of the traditional single sample, resulting in what has
been described as a more accurate simulated field. This was employed in features such as Baz
Luhrmann's Australia and Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole. After graduating
from the UTS, Chris worked on TV commercials and then moved into the film sector, where
he has worked on hits including The Matrix Reloaded, Moulin Rouge and Happy Feet 1 and 2.
As a former Chair of Screen NSW, I maintain a key interest in this sector, and Chris's work is
an example of the high-skilled jobs of the future we should all be fostering in this country. I
extend my congratulations to Chris and his family. (Time expired)

Country Women's Association

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (13:50): We have heard a lot about the drought in the past
week and the government's $320 million relief package. This drought is a shocking natural
weather disaster that has hit 70 per cent of Queensland. I want to pay tribute to a dedicated
and down-to-earth group of people who have made an extraordinary effort to reach out to
those affected. The Country Women's Association have proven to be the guardian angels of
the bush during this drought across the country. In Queensland, the QCWA, under the
direction of State President Robyn McFarlane, from my electorate of Capricornia, have been
operating the CWA Public Rural Crisis Fund. They have been providing money for vouchers
for food and other necessities to those in rural communities who desperately need a hand. The
vouchers are spent at stores in local rural towns in drought areas, to not only support farmers
and rural workers but also support small business, who are also struggling as a result of the
dry. The QCWA gets many phone calls to the state office. One example was a woman who could not afford to pay the registration of the farm ute that was needed to bring in feed for starving stock. Her family was in despair. Other families cannot afford to pay their phone bills, which is a necessity in such isolated areas. Australia should be proud that we have the CWA, and today, in Australia's parliament, I salute and honour these women and all of our country women who are lending a hand in the drought.

**Amanda Young Foundation**

*Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (13:52):* I take this opportunity to recognise the Amanda Young Foundation and the important work being undertaken by this organisation in the fight against the deadly meningococcal disease, particularly in my home state of Western Australia. The foundation was formed in 1998 by parents Barry and Lorraine Young following the tragic death of their daughter, Amanda, who contracted the disease after a rowing event in 1997 at the age of 18. Last Wednesday I had the pleasure of meeting Barry and Lorraine at the Meningococcal Australia breakfast held here at Parliament House.

Meningococcal disease is an extremely deadly and contagious disease caused by bacteria which develops in the throat and nose and can be easily spread by activities such as sneezing, coughing, and sharing food or drink. The Amanda Young Foundation is a non-profit community organisation dedicated to reducing deaths in WA while also supporting survivors of the disease. The foundation is also committed to supporting the development of young people into WA’s future leaders. The foundation organises an annual camp for year 11 school students across the state to support and encourage the development of leadership skills as well as numerous awards to high school and university students. The foundation hosts a number of fundraising events, including an annual ball, which this year will be held on 17 May. These events fund the foundation’s work, including awareness raising about meningococcal disease.

Let us remember Amanda Young and all those who have lost their lives to this terrible disease. Let us also remember the critical role the Commonwealth has in investing in disease prevention and treatment.

**Workplace Relations**

*Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (13:53):* I predict that the name Martin Ferguson will be well used in this House over the next 12 months if not longer. It will be the most used name of a former member that this House has ever recorded in *Hansard*. I say that at the time when he has made some comments after the coalition introduced a raft of changes to the fair work laws to parliament on Thursday to tighten right of entry rules for unions, to allow employees to trade penalty rates for more flexible hours, to close so-called strike-first talk-later loopholes, et cetera. Everybody knows what he said.

On the weekend I was at the Warragul show with the local mayor, who said he had to go to Yarragon and plead with businesses to remain open. They say they cannot because of the penalty rates on Sundays. This means that the young people in the electorates of regional members are not getting an opportunity to get their first job. There would not be one person in this room who did not have a first job somewhere, whether it was delivering newspapers or cutting swedes or hay. Only the older gentlemen in the room would know what I am talking about, because it is now all done by machines. It is important that we give our children in regional areas the opportunity to get their first job. We have to do something about penalty
rates to do that. I say again that Martin Ferguson will have his name used in this place for the next two years. *(Time expired)*

**Environment**

*Mrs McNAMARA* (Dobell) (13:55): Yesterday I joined with volunteers from the Berkeley Vale Scout Group for Clean Up Australia Day. For the past 20 years Australians have devoted more than 24 million hours towards the environment through Clean Up Australia Day and collected over 200,000 tonnes of rubbish. This year I lent a hand cleaning up the foreshore of the magnificent Tuggerah Lake at a clean-up site organised by scout patrol leader Kate Sanderson.

Kate is 14 years old and belongs to the 1st Berkeley Vale Scout Group. Kate has achieved her Grey Wolf Award, which is the highest award in the Cub Scout section, and is now working towards her Scout Medallion. As part of organising the clean-up site, Kate coordinated other scout members to assist her. Kate will also return to the site over the next three months with her own scout patrol to ensure that there is continued environmental improvement. I was honoured to have been invited by Kate and the Scouts to lend a hand on Clean Up Australia Day. The 54 Clean Up Australia Day sites across Dobell demonstrate our community's commitment to our local environment.

This government is serious about assisting local environmental groups who are working to deliver practical improvements to our local environment. Our Green Army program will be Australia's largest ever environmental workforce, building to 15,000 participants by 2018 and capable of delivering 1,500 on-ground environmental projects. The Green Army will recruit young people aged 17 to 24 years who are interested in protecting their local environment while gaining hands-on practical skills and experience. I congratulate and thank Kate, the Berkeley Vale Scout Group and all volunteers across my electorate who volunteered their time on Clean Up Australia Day.

**Canberra**

*Dr LEIGH* (Fraser) (13:56): The member for Canberra and I have long known that this is Australia's most livable city, but a new report from the Property Council has provided statistical evidence to back up that fundamental truth.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

*Dr LEIGH:* I appreciate the calls of support I received from my own side on this. Canberra is a city that enjoys greater levels of sporting participation and greater levels of community activity. Canberrans are more likely to volunteer their time, more likely to donate their money and more likely to be part of a community group that gives back to their society.

Canberra is a city where you do not have to burn a litre of petrol to buy a litre of milk. People can enjoy the experience of suburban living without the traffic congestion that is difficult in some of our other cities. A typical Sydneysider with a full-time job spends 13 days a year sitting in their car. A typical Canberran with a full-time job spends just eight days a year sitting in their car.

This city is one which I believe all members of parliament should be proud. It is not just another city; it is our nation's capital. I encourage my colleagues on both sides of parliament to feel a sense of pride in our nation's capital with the school groups and community members who visit us here.
Payne, Mr Harold Stanley (Stan)

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:58): I rise to pay tribute to Harold Stanley Payne, who died in Launceston on 17 February aged 87. Stan was a wonderful, cultured man who loved literature and poetry and bestowed his enthusiasm on several generations of Tasmanian teachers. Stan was born in Cardiff and was fiercely proud of his Welsh heritage and loved the music of the valleys. He joined the Royal Army Educational Corps towards the end of World War II and helped prepare fighting men and women for demobilisation into civilian life.

He met Barbara Luck on a beach in France, little knowing that their marriage would lead them back to Barbara's home of Tasmania. As well as teaching, Stan supported his wife in her community work, most notably as the Mayor of Launceston. Stan was a proud constitutional monarchist and was in his element when Her Majesty visited Launceston in 1981.

He and Barbara had four children: Anna, Richard, Rachel and Sarah. They were proud grandparents of nine and great-grandparents of two. He was a compassionate carer for his wife in her final years. Stan was an ornament to our community and, although increasingly frail physically, Stan had a sharp mind right up to the end. I corresponded with him as recently as December and respected his old-school charm, coupled with a perceptive view of current affairs. Owing to parliamentary sittings, I could not attend Stan's funeral, but I know many did, including several generations of educators. I express my sincere condolences to Stan's family.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ukraine

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister update the House on the situation in Ukraine? What response has Australia advocated through our role on the United Nations Security Council?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): The situation in the Ukraine is fluid and it is threatening. It is something that all Australians are rightly concerned about and that people right around the world are rightly concerned about. I can inform the House that this morning the Russian ambassador was called into the department of foreign affairs to be told in no uncertain terms what Australia thinks about this aggression against an independent country. I can inform the House that a visit to Russia by the Minister for Trade and Investment will not go ahead and I can further inform the House that a visit to Australia by the Russian national security adviser likewise will not go ahead.

Unprovoked aggression should have no place in our world. Russia should back off; it should withdraw its forces from the Ukraine. The people of the Ukraine ought to be able to determine their future themselves. That is what should happen.

Mr Shorten: Madam Deputy Speaker, on indulgence: I associate the opposition with the Prime Minister's remarks. Today, our thoughts are with all the people of Ukraine. We understand that people of all faiths and backgrounds have worked hard to create a Ukrainian democracy. Our thoughts are also with the Australian Ukrainian community, who are very
Monday, 3 March 2014  HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  1315

cconcerned for the wellbeing of their family in that valiant, proud nation. Again, the opposition supports the actions of the government.

Aviation

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. How can the government reduce the costs faced by the Australian aviation industry?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:02): I thank the member for Brisbane for her question. I assure her that, as far as the government is concerned, there should be no talking down of a great Australian airline. Qantas is a great Australian airline. It is an airline with a great past and an airline which should have a great future. Australians love to travel. We love to travel domestically; we love to travel internationally. The market for Australian travel should increase as the years go by. This means there is absolutely no reason, whatsoever, why Qantas and all other Australian airlines should not have a great future, except for the shackles that legislation has placed not just on Qantas but on all Australian airlines. I refer particularly to the carbon tax—the tax that members opposite said was never going to happen; the tax that members opposite said had been terminated in the middle of last year. That tax is so terminated that last financial year Qantas paid $106 million in carbon tax; Virgin paid almost $50 million in carbon tax and even Rex paid more than $2 million in carbon tax. The best thing that this parliament can do for the airline industry right now is axe the tax. I will quote Virgin CEO John Borghetti, who is someone who knows a bit about airlines. He works for Virgin but he has worked for Qantas. He said:

… the best assistance the government and the opposition can provide is the removal of the carbon tax, which has cost this industry hundreds of millions of dollars. To that end, I just say we applaud the government's position on this.

There is something that this parliament can do today. There are bills in the Senate right now that are specifically directed not at the overall repeal of the carbon tax but at repealing the carbon tax on airlines. I know that the Leader of the Opposition likes the carbon tax, generally, but if he wants to help the airline industry he should let us pass those bills that will take the carbon tax off the airlines. I am happy to work with the Leader of the Opposition to free the airline industry from the carbon tax today. I would like to free everyone from the carbon tax, but let us work together on just this one thing—that is, to look after the jobs at Qantas by taking the carbon tax off the workers there.

Qantas

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): Talking of someone who talks about airlines, does the Prime Minister agree with the Treasurer's statement that there is a significant community benefit in having a national carrier?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:05): Of course I agree with the Treasurer! There is never a moment when I do not agree with the Treasurer.

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: I tell you what, does the Leader of the Opposition agree with his shadow minister that the government is the major shareholder in Qantas? Does the Leader of the Opposition agree with his shadow minister that the Commonwealth has a majority share in Qantas? This is not something that the shadow minister said in 1994; he said it today.
Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance.

The SPEAKER: Has the Prime Minister concluded his answer?

Mr Abbott: I am happy to keep going.

Mr Burke: If the Prime Minister is going to continue he should be directly relevant. He clearly is not. He knows that questions are asked of the executive, not by the executive.

The SPEAKER: It was a pretty broad-ranging question. It simply asked if the Prime Minister agreed with the Treasurer.

Mr Abbott: Madam Speaker, I was asked about disagreements between party leaders and their frontbenchers, and here is a classic case—a classic case of a senior frontbencher who has not realised that two decades have gone by since the Labor Party sold Qantas lock, stock and barrel into the private sector. He is still living in the good old days of state-owned airlines. We are not.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: is the Prime Minister even going to pretend to abide by the standing orders?

The SPEAKER: We have already had a point of order on relevance.

Mr Burke: I know, but we have not had a ruling in accordance with the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I have already said it was a very broad-ranging question.

Mr Abbott: Unlike members opposite, who are completely clueless when it comes to the facts of the aviation industry in this country, we will make sure as far as we humanly can that we give all the airlines of this country the support they need to keep going, and the best support we can do is to take the carbon tax off them—a $100 million a year hit on the workers of Qantas. The Leader of the Opposition supports it but we oppose it and we will free the workers of Qantas from this $100 million a year tax on their jobs.

Ukraine

Mr Williams (Hindmarsh) (14:09): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I refer the minister to the escalating situation in the Ukraine, which is of deep concern to the people in my electorate of Hindmarsh. Further to the Prime Minister’s answer, will the minister advise the House how the Australian government has responded to these troubling events?

Ms Julie Bishop (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:09): I thank the member for Hindmarsh for his question and I acknowledge that he is deeply concerned, as are other members who have Ukrainian communities in their electorate, about the escalating crisis that we see in Ukraine. I can confirm, as the Prime Minister has, that both sides of the House are gravely concerned about the escalation that we have seen—an escalation in Russian military activity, an escalation in tensions. In recent days the Russian parliament has authorised the use of force inside Ukraine. This is a significant but wholly unacceptable development. It undermines the right of the Ukrainian people to choose their own destiny. The Australian government has urged Russia to withdraw its troops, to step back from Ukraine and to de-escalate its activities that are persisting in this unfolding crisis. We are particularly concerned that the new Ukrainian government requested urgent talks with the Russian Federation. This
request was rebuffed outright. We are greatly concerned that the lines of communication between the parties be kept open. This is a time for diplomacy and dialogue.

We join with the international community in calling on the Russian Federation to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and its territorial integrity. In particular, we are calling on the new government of Ukraine to continue to exercise restraint in the face of provocation. Today, on my direction, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade called in the Russian ambassador to formally register our concerns with the Russian government and to ascertain the intentions of the Russian government in this matter. We will continue to maintain that dialogue. Over the past 48 hours, the United Nations Security Council has also met on two occasions. Our ambassador to the United Nations, our permanent representative, Ambassador Gary Quinlan, has given a clear, unequivocal message on behalf of the Australian government and the Australian people, and that is that we support Ukraine's sovereignty. The use of force is utterly unacceptable. It is contrary to the UN charter of rights and it is contrary to international agreements that Russia has signed to preserve Ukraine's sovereignty. We will remain in very close contact with our friends and allies and the members of the UN Security Council.

I urge Australians thinking of travelling to Ukraine and the surrounding area to log on to the government's Smartraveller website. The travel advisory will be updated; it will be under constant review as the situation changes. This is an extremely volatile, fluid situation and extreme caution must be exercised. I will keep the House informed of any further developments.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): On indulgence, Madam Speaker, I want to associate myself, as the Leader of the Opposition has, with the comments made by both the Prime Minister and the foreign minister on events in Ukraine. Things are unfolding very quickly and the opposition offers our support to the government in making very clear to Russia that the actions we have seen thus far are not appropriate, and we certainly hope our position on the Security Council is used to make our view very clear.

Qantas

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Treasurer confirmed on 13 February that Qantas had met each of the Treasurer's four preconditions for government involvement in individual enterprises. Prime Minister, if Qantas has met the Treasurer's test, why will the government not act?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:13): We are more than happy, as the Treasurer has abundantly made clear, to take the shackles off Qantas. That is what we want to do. We want to get rid of the carbon tax, which is a $100 million-plus hit on Qantas jobs, and we do want to remove from Qantas the shackles placed upon it by the Qantas Sale Act. Again I say to Leader of the Opposition: if he is fair dinkum about wanting to help the workers at Qantas, if he is fair dinkum about wanting to do the right thing by Qantas—make Qantas more competitive and more efficient in these difficult days—he should work with the government to decouple the bills in the Senate so that this very day we can free all of the airlines of this country from the carbon tax. The only thing stopping that is the Leader of the Opposition.
Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The question referred specifically to the Treasurer's four preconditions, and the Prime Minister is going absolutely nowhere near it.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister is addressing the issue that was raised in the question, but it would be good if he would address it specifically.

Mr ABBOTT: What members opposite essentially want the government to do is provide to one airline what we would not provide to all. What this government wants to do is ensure that all airlines are given the level playing field that they deserve. Unlike members opposite who believe in chequebook government and playing favourites amongst businesses, we do not. We want to give all airlines a fair go, and that includes Qantas.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The SPEAKER: Manager of Opposition Business, you have already had one point of order on relevance; you cannot have two.

Mr Burke: You agreed with my ruling, Madam Speaker, and the Prime Minister defied it. If it assists the Prime Minister, I seek leave to table—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has concluded his answer. The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat.

Mr Burke: I just sought leave to table a document. Why can't I do that at the end of an answer?

The SPEAKER: You can. Is leave given?

Mr Pyne: No.

The SPEAKER: Leave is not given.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, you have not allowed me to say what the document is. I don't know if they can tell when I hold it up, but I think it is reasonable for me to explain what the document is.

The SPEAKER: Does the Leader of the House intend to give leave to this document—

Mr BURKE: Regardless of what it is?

The SPEAKER: regardless of what it is?

Mr Pyne: No.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House has said that, regardless of what it is, he is not giving leave. The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat.

Mr Burke: Is it now the case that, against all the traditions of this House, we are no longer allowed to say what the document is? Because that is an extraordinary ruling inconsistent with—

The SPEAKER: It is not a ruling.

Mr Burke: every single precedent set by people who have sat in that chair.

The SPEAKER: It is not a ruling. We will see what happens next time.

Mr Burke: If there is no ruling, I seek leave to table the four principles that were laid down by the Treasurer.

The SPEAKER: Is leave given?
Mr Pyne: No, it is not.

The SPEAKER: Leave is not given.

_Qantas_

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (14:17): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer inform the House of the importance of securing the future of the airline industry and, in particular, reforming the Qantas Sale Act based on evidence?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:17): I thank the member for Forde for the question. He is known to all of us as ‘Bert the Beattie Beater’! He does care about the aviation industry in Australia, which has grown in domestic passenger numbers since 2005 by 4.5 per cent per annum and in international passenger numbers since 2005 at an average of 5.1 per cent per annum. I am glad I was asked a question by someone in this House about all my words in relation to Qantas. It is no secret that Qantas has been having some challenges over the last few years. In fact, in his recent public statement, the chief executive of Qantas recognised that they have been speaking to governments about the challenges for two years.

I came across a letter of comfort from the member for Grayndler.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: There he is! This was a letter of comfort from the Australian taxpayers to Qantas to try and reassure the rating agencies that the government would stand behind Qantas. I bet that was not just something given out to every business in Australia. No, there must have been some reason why the member for Grayndler would write a letter like that, and I am sure he spoke to all of his colleagues. But, of course, all the problems of Qantas are a rude shock to Labor. They still think it’s in government ownership. The should call a shareholders meeting to address their problems!

But there is more because Labor just does not deal with the facts. Today, when I heard the member for Grayndler say, ‘Part of the obligations in the Qantas Sale Act are for regional services and the regional network,’ I rushed to my copy of the Qantas Sale Act and could not see anything there about it. There was nothing in the act about regional services. He was a transport minister for six years and never read the Qantas Sale Act.

But there is more. This guy over here, the member for McMahon, was the Treasurer and he went on the doors today and said, ‘A debt guarantee—you don't need legislation for that.’ But you do because you cannot appropriate money if you do not have legislation and you cannot give a guarantee that means anything if you do not have an appropriation. So you have a former Treasurer who does not understand the facts, a former transport minister who does not understand the facts and a frontbench that still thinks they own Qantas. The bottom line is that, as the chief executive of Virgin and the chief executive of Qantas said, the best thing you can do for the aviation industry is get rid of the carbon tax now.

_Qantas_

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:20): My question is to the Prime Minister. After the Treasurer confirmed that Qantas had met each of the government’s four preconditions for a debt guarantee, the Qantas share price rose by around 10 per cent. What will the implications for the Qantas share price and its shareholders be if the government does nothing?
Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, clearly, that question is out of order. There is no possibility that the Prime Minister—

Opposition members: Why?

Mr Pyne: For three reasons: it is entirely hypothetical, it is not within the Prime Minister's responsibility and there is no possibility the Prime Minister could answer that question because no-one can determine which way the share market will move at any point in time.

The SPEAKER: I will hear the Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr Burke: It has been the case for many, many decades that ministers in this parliament will indicate what they think policy decisions will have on the markets and other indicators. To say that those questions have been out of order for generations would be a very odd ruling.

The SPEAKER: Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition might like to rephrase his question.

Mr SHORTEN: After the Treasurer confirmed that Qantas had met each of the government's four preconditions for a debt guarantee, the Qantas share price rose by around 10 per cent. What are you going to do to the share price now that you have lead Qantas up the garden path?

The SPEAKER: With respect, I do not think that that rephrasing of the question helped very much. It still has the impediment in it that the Prime Minister has some power over that. However, if the Prime Minister chooses to answer the question he may do so.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:22): I have two points in response to the Leader of the Opposition: first of all, he should stop verballing the Treasurer and, secondly, he should stop talking down Qantas. That is what he should do. He should stop talking down Qantas. If he is serious about helping Qantas today, this very day he should join with the government and lift the carbon tax from Qantas and all other airlines.

Asylum Seekers

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (14:23): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Minister, you said that you could guarantee the safety of refugees under Australia's care at Manus Island if they remained in the detention centre and acted cooperatively. Given consistent reports that refugee Reza Berati was doing exactly that when he was beaten to death, is it not now clear that your commitment is worthless and that you cannot guarantee their safety? Or is the brutality at Manus Island simply another plank in your policy of deterring vulnerable people who are seeking our protection?

The SPEAKER: Before I call the minister, the last part of the question was coming very close to being a reflection on a member. However, with that reservation, if the minister is happy to answer it I will give him the call. But I would suggest that in future the member may choose to word it differently.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:24): I thank the member for his question. The death of Mr Berati is a tragedy. It is a terrible tragedy. It is as tragic as the 1,200 other deaths that occurred over the last five years. All of those deaths were no less tragic than that of Mr Berati—the children who died at sea were of the some 8,000 who got on boats over the last five years, when the previous government joined up with the Greens to abolish the measures that worked under the Howard government. They abolished them.
The situation on Manus Island has been very difficult—it has. The previous government put in place arrangements on Manus Island. They put in place all of the arrangements and all of the contractors that were present on that night. Soon after becoming the Minister for Immigration, I went to Manus Island and one of the first things that was presented to me was the issue of security in the compound. As a result of that we commissioned a force protection assessment review and started taking immediate steps to improve the security of that compound. I believe that the steps we took over the ensuing four to five months saved lives on that night.

Managing a centre in a situation like that, where there are rising tensions—where we have been working for months to try to put in place the details of the resettlement arrangements and the processing arrangements on Manus Island that were left undone by the previous government—has led to the increase in tensions in that place. We are working on that, but it remains the case that if there is riotous behaviour and if there are people who are not cooperating with the care and support that is being provided to them in centres then the risk in those centres inevitably goes up.

We have been working to reduce that risk. The report which we have announced and put in place is now going to be conducted in partnership with the government of Papua New Guinea. The police investigation which is underway there and the coronial inquiry will get to the facts. They will get to the facts. We will know what happened on that night. I am not going to speculate on the conduct of any individuals on that night, but the report will find out and I will wait for the report to find out.

Aviation Industry

Ms PRICE (Durack) (14:26): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the minister update the House on the impact of the carbon tax on aviation in Australia? Is there anything that can be done to ensure the viability of Australia's aviation sector into the future?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:27): I thank the member for Durack who, arguably, would travel longer by air than anyone to be here week by week. She fully understands the importance of aviation in regional communities and in linking regional Australia to the rest of the nation.

The aviation sector is vital to the national economy. It behoves us all to take note when the aviation industry has reported a loss in the first half year for the first time in more than a decade. The reality is that the carbon tax is bleeding this industry. The carbon tax is adding to its costs—costs which cannot be added on to consumers. The cost is not just the direct cost that the airlines have to pick up through their fuel bills but it is also the impact on tourism, and the fact that we have been made less competitive as a country as a result of the carbon tax.

There is the mining tax as well. It means that fewer people fly, and so the airlines have been left in a less profitable position. The CEO of Virgin nailed it, John Borghetti, when he made it absolutely clear that it was the carbon tax that was the most important thing that governments could do to make a difference to the airlines, and that it was making a substantial contribution to Virgin's drop in profitability.

Mr Albanese: They've got no impact!
Mr TRUSS: The member for Grayndler is the man who thinks that the Qantas Sale Act is about regional services, when they are not even mentioned in the act. When he was minister for transport, he said, 'The impact of the carbon tax will be little more than the cost of a cup of coffee.' Little more than the cost of a cup of coffee! Well, for Rex in the first half year the cost was $1.3 million! For Virgin it was $27 million in the first half year, and for Qantas it was $106 million in the year. I do not know when the shadow minister last bought a cup of coffee, but it was a very, very expensive cup of coffee! If it is so insignificant, why won't Labor join us in getting rid of the carbon tax? Get rid of the carbon tax!

The member for Gorton thinks that the government owns the airline. Five times he said on Sunday television that the government was the majority shareholder. Where was he when Paul Keating and Bob Hawke sold off every share in Qantas? The opposition is so out of touch, so lacking in understanding of the aviation sector. That is the only way they could be denying what the industry wants most. There is something they can do just as well as the government: that is, to vote against the carbon tax. Get rid of the carbon tax and that will be a major stride forward for the aviation industry and its profitability in Australia.

Qantas

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (14:30): My question is also directed to the Deputy Prime Minister and minister for transport. I refer to his media statement, when he said the loss of effective Australian control could leave Australia without an airline primarily committed to our interests. What safeguards will be put in place for the Australian flying public, particularly those in regional areas? I say to the Deputy Prime Minister: when will the government stop arguing among themselves and act to support Qantas and Australian jobs, particularly those in regional communities?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:31): I thank the honourable member for his question. We know that he does not understand the aviation legislation, but maybe he should read the Air Navigation Act which makes it absolutely clear that if you want to be a national carrier for Australia, fly international routes and exercise Australian landing rights, you have to be majority owned in Australia. So for all of our national carriers, their international arm must be majority owned by Australians. That is not only laid down in our own legislation but is also a part of the international conventions we have signed in relation to these types of issues.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Perth will desist.

Mr TRUSS: The second part of his question relates to regional Australian air services, which are not mentioned in the Qantas Sale Act. The reality is that regional aviation in Australia, the QantasLink services operated by Qantas, has been trading profitably over recent times. Rex is the only airline in Australia that actually reported a profit for the half year. It was a tiny one, but at least they reported a profit. Of course, Virgin is expanding strongly into regional areas because they also believe that regional Australia is a great place in which to operate air services. So I am confident—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Perth is warned.
Mr TRUSS: that regional airlines, without the burden of a carbon tax, can trade profitably into the future.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta has already been warned.

Mr TRUSS: They can provide services in regional communities, and the opposition can help to make that a certainty. They can vote down the carbon tax. Get rid of the carbon tax—then Rex, Qantas and Virgin, in their regional services, will be more profitable than they are today.

Carbon Pricing

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Employment. How would removing the carbon tax assist employment in the airline industry? What are the challenges to repealing this tax?

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta will remove herself under standing order 94(a).

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:33): I am very pleased to take this question from the member for Petrie because he, like this side of the House, recognises that the carbon tax is having a very real and negative impact on jobs in the airline industry. In fact, in the last financial year it was a $106 million negative impact on Qantas and $45 million impact on Virgin, leading John Borghetti, the CEO of Virgin, to say on Friday: 'The best assistance the government and the opposition can provide is the removal of the carbon tax which has cost this industry hundreds of millions of dollars.'

Now the opposition could fix this today. We have a lot of crocodile tears from the Leader of the Opposition; a lot of wringing of hands from the opposition about jobs at Qantas. As the Minister for Education, representing for the Minister for Employment, I say that this side of the House has legislation ready to go that would assist Qantas and Virgin and jobs in the airline industry today. The Customs Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 and the Excise Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 sit in the Senate being debated as we speak. Both of those bills could be separated out from the rest of the carbon tax repeal legislation and passed today by the combined votes of the government and the opposition. If the opposition really cared about jobs in the airline industry they would stop the rhetoric, they would actually measure up and they would indicate—and I give the opportunity to the Leader of Opposition to do so at the end of this answer—that they will help Qantas and Virgin today by repealing the carbon tax on the airline industry.

I suspect they will not. I suspect that the Leader of the Opposition is more concerned about the Qantas unions than he is about Qantas workers. This is his big opportunity, but I suspect he will not do it because he said in February 2013: 'I am very proud to carry into the Parliament of Australia every day, my union membership card.' Now here we are again—

Opposition members: Hear, hear! 

Mr PYNE: 'Hear, hear!', they are all saying. They are delighted. They should table this, as union members. Has he got it on him or was he just making that up? Does he walk in here
with his union membership card? Why does he not walk in here with his 'putting Australia first' card or his 'putting the Qantas workers first' card, rather than his employment union membership card?

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Silence on my left.

Mr PYNE: The problem with the Leader of the Opposition is he cannot forget his background. He cannot rise above being a union official representing union officials. But this is a big test for him.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will desist.

Mr PYNE: If he really cares about Qantas workers, he will put aside his union membership card and vote the carbon tax through in the Senate.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:36): I wish to advise the House that we have with us the Local Government Association of South Australia, led by Mayor Lorraine Rosenberg, who is the Acting President. We also have the Adelaide City Lord Mayor Stephen Yarwood. We make them all very welcome to this House.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Qantas

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:37): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's statement in parliament last week when he said: I think the workers of this country do not want talk; they want action.

After three months and 5,000 job losses, when will Qantas employees and passengers finally see some action from this government?

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will have silence on my right.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:37): We wish to free the workers of Qantas from a $100 billion hit on their jobs. We want to do it today.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Those on my left will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: We want to do it today, and I say to the Leader of the Opposition: he should stop huffing and puffing. Just for once he should be useful. Just for once he should leave the union card at home and he should get out of the way, let the carbon tax repeal legislation go through the Senate and take this $100 million tax off Qantas workers.

Carbon Pricing

Mr PORTER (Pearce) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. I refer to figures released by the Clean Energy Regulator that show that the carbon tax has hit—

Opposition members interjecting—
Mr PORTER: Western Australia with at least $627 million in higher costs in the last financial year. Minister, who will benefit if the carbon tax is repealed?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (14:38): The answer is: Western Australian families, Western Australian workers and Western Australian firms. I want to thank the member for Pearce. He is a multitalented member of parliament. He was Treasurer of WA. Many would say he is extremely good-looking, in my office; charming; intelligent and, above all else, somebody concerned about electricity bills and bills of all sorts.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence.

Mr HUNT: The member opposite wants to do something that is all about action, not talk. Right on this day, he can have his senators walk into the Senate, get out of the way, repeal the carbon tax and, in particular, repeal the fuel tax bills on Qantas, Virgin and Rex. If you care about action, not talk, it is right there—it is available today, this very moment.

In terms of Western Australia, the question was: what are we able to do to help Western Australian firms? The Clean Energy Regulator was absolutely clear. There are 63 major firms in WA today that are directly paying the carbon tax. Western Australian firms, however, are part of the 75,000 that are paying the diesel tax. And, more than that, Western Australian firms, along with all other Australian firms, are paying it through their electricity, gas and refrigeration costs.

More than that again—let's go to the details—when you look at the Western Australian figures, you see that we have $4.1 billion of national electricity costs because of the carbon tax: $200 million for the Electricity Generation Corporation in WA alone and $60 million for Bluewaters Power station. Then, beyond that, we go to mining and manufacturing and the way they have been hit. In LNG, Woodside energy has a $172 million carbon tax bill. In alumina, a sector under enormous pressure, BHP's Worsley alumina refinery has a $56 million bill. In fertilisers, the Yara Pilbara operation has a $35 million tax. The state government is hit with $50 million of direct costs in terms of schools, hospitals and police and emergency services. And this is the tax that you want to keep on schools, hospitals, police and emergency services. That is what the modern Labor Party has come to—a tax on the most basic services at state level. We then go to the fact that every Western Australian household will be part of the benefit of $550 per household per year if we get rid of the carbon tax. So, if the Leader of the Opposition wants action, not talk, he should go to his senators, get them off strike and get out of the way.

**Qantas**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:41): My question is to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister believe that it is important that Qantas still calls Australia home?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:42): I do want Qantas to call Australia home, and I do want Qantas to flourish into the future. But the best thing we can do to help Qantas to call Australia home, not just now but forever—

Mr Shorten: Is to sell it off!
The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition has asked his question. He will listen to the answer.

Mr ABBOTT: is to remove the shackles which are holding Qantas back. The Leader of the Opposition is complaining on behalf of Qantas. I want to work on behalf of Qantas. I want this parliament to work on behalf of Qantas by, this very day, repealing the carbon tax and taking that $100 million hit off Qantas and off Qantas workers.

Budget

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (14:43): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline the importance of responsible management of the budget? How does responsible management of the budget benefit my constituents in Hasluck?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:43): I thank the member for Hasluck for his question and recognise that he knows, like most Australians know, that having responsible economic management is closely linked to responsible management of the budget. As I advised the House last week, the recent IMF assessment of comparisons between the 17 key economies identified that the Labor Party had locked in, from 2012, the largest percentage increase in spending of any of the top 17 countries in the world. Understand this: the Labor Party locked in increases in government expenditure at a higher rate than any other developed economy in the world—of the top 17 IMF countries identified. Our spending is growing faster than that of Korea, Canada, Germany, France and Japan. Some of those countries are printing money, they are spending so quickly. The Labor Party locked us in to the highest expenditure growth of any of the top 17 countries. But now there is more: the IMF has released a further assessment that says, ‘For the six years 2012-18, Australia is forecast to have the third largest increase in net debt as a percentage of GDP.’

This is the legacy of Labor. They lock in expenditure growth at record levels and they lock in debt increases at record levels. Then they are in shock when savings have to be made to the budget and they are in shock when taxation increases. Labor do not have restraint. As we have heard today, senior Labor ministers in the previous government did not even understand their own portfolios, yet they act surprised when they see that the budget is forecast for 10 years of deficit—$123 billion of deficits over the next four years alone and $667 billion of debt. That is the legacy of Labor.

We are up for the task of fixing this mess. We are determined to fix the mess that Labor left behind. To the Labor Party: if it has not been sobering enough for you to lose an election, just walk down to the Senate and help us pass $20 billion of savings that we promised to help fix up the budget now.

Qantas

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (14:46): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to Qantas's announcement last week of 5,000 job losses after they and the market factored in an expectation of government support. When will the government deliver on the expected debt guarantee and what will the implications be for jobs if you walk away from that guarantee?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:47): The basic problem for Qantas is that the party opposite that sold Qantas are not prepared to free Qantas. That is what should happen. Qantas should be free to compete, to survive and to flourish. That is what this government wants to do. One thing I am not going to do is stand at this dispatch box and do
what members opposite have done for the last week or so. I am not going to talk Qantas
down; I am going to allow Qantas to compete on a level playing field with every other airline
in this country, because I have confidence in the workers of Qantas and I have confidence in
the staff of Qantas. Unshackle Qantas and they can continue to be one of the world's great
airlines.

Building and Construction Industry

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (14:48): My question is to the
Minister for Education, representing the Minister for Employment. Will the minister update
the House on support from within the labour movement to re-establish the Australian
Building and Construction Commission? Can the minister tell the House what is preventing
the re-establishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission?

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide will desist or remove herself from the
chamber.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:48): The member
for Adelaide is welcome to ask me a question if she could get one up in the tactics committee.
Perhaps not after the last disaster! I am very pleased to report that support for the
government's IR move to the sensible centre is coming from Labor figures who would not
necessarily normally support the government. In February just passed, Paul Howes, Secretary
of the Australian Workers Union, said:

And I won't be popular amongst my friends in the labour movement for saying this - but I agree.

And we agree with Paul Howes. But last week at the CEDA conference in Perth, a most
unlikely source of support came for the coalition's position on Fair Work and on the
Australian Building and Construction Commission, and that came from Martin Ferguson, the
very well respected former cabinet minister in the last Gillard and Rudd governments—one of
the lions of the labour movement. He said at the CEDA conference, 'The ABCC is a
mechanism that holds both sides to account and which can help deliver projects on time and
on budget.' He also said: 'The government has tabled some changes to the FWA to bring into
effect their pre-election policy commitments. While the changes are a step in the right
direction they are really quite modest.'

So we have support from Martin Ferguson, the better side of the gene pool of the Ferguson
brothers in this place. But what did Brendan O'Connor, the shadow minister for workplace
relations, instantly say? He told Sky News that he was very disappointed that Mr Ferguson
had joined the other side. Following up his remarks about Qantas being owned by the
Australian taxpayer, his response was to attack Martin Ferguson, a lion of the Labor Party.
But Joel Fitzgibbon rode in to defend Martin Ferguson. He said that Martin had been sharing
these views publicly and privately for a very long time.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It should not take a point of order
before you call people to refer to others by their proper titles.

The SPEAKER: The minister will refer to people by their proper titles.
Mr PYNE: It was the member for Hunter who starkly reminded the public of the choice facing the Leader of the Opposition—either he chooses to continue with a future shackled by the trade union movement, believing that they can force the economy to fit the union movement, or he can go forward into the future with a positive plan, as enunciated by the member for Hunter, which is to understand that the union movement is not the be-all of the economy in Australia. This is very difficult for the Leader of the Opposition because, as he said, he is union first, union second and union third. He said, 'I am very proud to wear into the parliament of Australia every day my union membership card.' It is time for him to put this—are you coming up to table his card? Has he shared it with you, because you are the people's choice and he is the faction's choice? The people's choice is riding in to defend the faction's choice!

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, my point of order is on relevance.

The SPEAKER: The time for the answer has elapsed.

Business Investment

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:52): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to evidence provided in Senate estimates last week that the $16 million grant to redevelop Cadbury's factory will come from the industry instead of the tourism portfolio. Given the Prime Minister's statement to parliament that what we do for one business, in fairness, we have to make available to all businesses, will SPC, Holden and Qantas be receiving tourism grants from within the industry portfolio?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:53): Regardless of which portfolio the money comes from, it is a great investment. How do I know? Because the shadow minister sitting opposite, the member who has asked the question, said that it is 'a great project, that gets our support'. Senator Urquhart, ALP Senator for Tasmania and Deputy Opposition Whip, said, 'Of course I welcome this announcement. I welcome investment in the Claremont site.' But listen to this: the Premier of Tasmania, who the Leader of the Opposition was with just this weekend, said 'I welcome this potential investment in Cadbury. It is fantastic.'

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It goes to relevance. We would have asked the minister for tourism if they had one, but they do not, so we went to the Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Trade

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (14:54): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the minister please update the House on the work the government is doing to strengthen our trade, business and investment ties with our largest trading partner? Minister, what new opportunities does the Chinese economy offer Australian businesses?

Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:54): I would like to thank the member for Ryan. This is a most appropriate question from someone who set up Conventions Queensland over 25 years ago and, from a room in the front of her house, established one of Queensland's leading management and events tourism businesses.

Trade and investment are two crucial factors in seeking to meet the challenge of restoring sustainable growth and sustainable jobs. China, as our biggest trading partner, is a big part of
that challenge. There is great scope to widen and to deepen our relationship because China's economy is changing. China is moving from a focus on exports—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler.

Mr ROBB: and shifting to a focus on domestic spending by way of the exploding middle class.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left.

Mr ROBB: Retail sales in China last year increased by 13 per cent, the opposite of what we saw in Australia under those on the other side. This will open up new opportunities for Australia across many areas in line with our strengths. That is why today the Prime Minister announced that, from 8 to 11 April this year, we will take a very big business group, which I will lead in association with Australia Week in China, involving the Prime Minister as part of his broader North Asian involvement. This trip will have industry-themed events across four major cities. It will involve hundreds of business people from Australia—350 have already nominated—and it will reflect our nation's strengths: things such as agribusiness, mining, health, tourism, food, urban planning and architecture.

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield.

Mr ROBB: It builds on our efforts to conclude a free trade agreement, which has been under negotiation since 2005 and is yet to be completed.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left.

Mr ROBB: It is on the back of an agreement with Korea, which those on the other side sought to negotiate for years without success. And we are working hard to complete the Japanese free trade agreement. All of these activities are an important part of giving us the opportunity for trade and investment, which will help us fix the mess that those on the other side created for this country. It is a critical issue, alongside the carbon and mining taxes. It is a very clear message for Australians.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: To describe the behaviour that is going on on the left of the chamber is simply to understate it. There will be some order on that side and we will then hear from the member for Ballarat.

Business Investment

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:58): My question is again to the Prime Minister. I refer to evidence provided by Senator Nash at Senate estimates that the minister's former chief of staff provided to her, and to the Government Staffing Committee, a document which details undertakings that there was no perceived or real conflict of interest. Will the Prime Minister release the document?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:58): No, I will not, but I think that the shadow minister should stop making herself unpopular with her colleagues. She should
support this investment, which the Premier of Tasmania described as 'fantastic'. This is what the Premier of Tasmania described as a fantastic investment and it should be supported.

**Asylum Seekers**

**Mr HOGAN** (Page) (14:59): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on the number of illegal boat arrivals reaching Australia and the impact of Operation Sovereign Borders on people smugglers?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:59): I thank the member for Page for the question. The Leader of the Opposition may be very interested to know the answer to this question that the member for Page has asked because last year, back in November, he said:

There's no doubt in my mind that the coalition's boat person policy is absolutely not working.

That is what the Leader of the Opposition said last November. He may like to know that for the last 74 days there has not been a single successful people-smuggling venture make it to Australia. He may also be interested to know that over that same period, when those opposite were running border protection, there were 33 vessels and 1,756 arrivals over that same period of time.

This may be news to those opposite, that that is what success looks like, but those opposite did not get to know what success looked like because, year after year, their policy failures led to boat after boat arriving. We have been able to achieve the success we have achieved so far—and there is further to go—because of a number of policies. But the one that has been most effective over the last 74 days has been what we are doing at sea. It is interesting to note that the shadow minister said of our policy in relation to turn backs:

Turning back the boats was always a furphy.

The former minister, the now shadow Treasurer, and the member for McMahon said Tony Abbott's policy of turning back the boats will not work. That is what he said: he said it will not work. He said:

I look forward to an explanation today or alternatively, them facing a dose of reality for a change and dropping this policy.

Here is the dose of reality: 74 days with not a single successful people-smuggling venture because of our policy to turn the boats back, because of our policy to intercept vessels that are coming illegally into our waters and remove them from our waters. The former Prime Minister said:

Mr Abbott is peddling a myth to the Australian people. … he's trying not to be exposed as telling the Australian people something that can’t and won't work.

Well, it is working. The only myth was what was peddled by those opposite when they sat on these benches and when they said the boats could not be stopped.

Finally, there is of course the Manager of Opposition Business, who, when he came to the job, said 'By the time we came to government we recognised it was not able to be done.' You know what? Where there is a will, there is a way. This government has the will and we have the way.
Economy

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to the Treasurer's comments on 27 April last year:
I think companies will unleash their balance sheets, and I think consumers will as well if there is a change of government.

Following the capital expenditure figures, which showed a 5.2 per cent decline in the December quarter—the worst results since the global financial crisis—is this yet another example of the government promising one thing before the election and delivering something very different afterwards?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:03): I do accept that members opposite are supremely embarrassed about their record in government. That is what I accept.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order: relevance. To assist on direct relevance, during the December quarter they were in government.

The SPEAKER: I do not need assistance, thank you.

Mr Burke: The Prime Minister is not aware and it is very important that they were in government in the December quarter.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: The record of members opposite, quite apart from the 55,000 illegal arrivals by boat, was 200,000 more unemployed people and debt skyrocketing towards $667 billion. We were elected to fix this and fix this we will. We will fix it. We are marching to the rescue of this nation from the wreckage that we inherited from members opposite.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left. The Prime Minister has the call. The member for Jagajaga will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: It suits them now—

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will remove himself under standing order 94(a).

The member for Isaacs then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: to pretend that it was the best government that this country has ever seen. But the fact is the record of members opposite is of 50,000 illegal arrivals by boat, 200,000 extra unemployed people and debt skyrocketing towards $667 billion. We will fix it.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The SPEAKER: You have already had one on relevance.

Mr Burke: But Madam Speaker, unless we have a situation where illegal arrivals are being—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will remove himself or else resume his seat. The choice is his. The Prime Minister has the call. He has concluded his answer. I call the member for Robertson.
Broadband

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (15:05): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Will the minister outline the key barriers holding back internet usage in Australia. How does affordability affect household access to broadband?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (15:06): I thank the honourable member for her question. The biggest barrier to internet access in Australia is not technology but lack of income. It has been always thus. The Australian Bureau of Statistics only last week confirmed that households in the poorest income quintile, the lowest income quintile, were more than 10 times less likely to have access to the internet at home than those in the wealthiest quintile—that is to say, of the lowest income bracket, 41 per cent had no access to the internet; of the wealthiest, four per cent—so affordability is obviously absolutely vital. But what was the inevitable object of Labor's approach to broadband? Making internet access less affordable than ever.

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield is warned.

Mr TURNBULL: Now I know that in the fantasy land of the Labor Party economics is not a strong suit. But the reality is that, if you create a massively overcapitalised government monopoly—what is that going to do to prices? It is going to put them up; what else can it do? Thirty-two billion dollars additional investment is what we would see if we proceeded with Labor's program. And, according to the strategic review, that would increase monthly broadband prices by 50 per cent to 80 per cent per month. The people on the Labor benches are mocking and scoffing; they do not care about the battlers they claim to represent.

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

The member for Wakefield then left the chamber.

Mr TURNBULL: They do not care about the people who cannot afford the internet today. Their goal, their objective, is to make the internet access that is unaffordable today to 41 per cent of people in the lowest income group even less affordable in the years to come. They are sticking with that policy. It is a policy the victims of which are the Australians they claim to represent and which they have so manifestly—on this and on so many other issues—and utterly abandoned.

This Labor policy would result in average broadband monthly prices increasing by $43 a month, making it even less affordable. So our policy is designed to have this project completed sooner, cheaper and more affordably. That will make it more affordable, and a key part of that is the fibre-to-the-node technology which we will be deploying shortly on the Central Coast at Umina. Australians then will see how a competent government will deliver broadband.

Mr Abbott: After 23 very well answered questions, Madam Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.
DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:09): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

MOTIONS

National Archives of Australia Advisory Council

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:09): by leave—I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of section 10 of the Archives Act 1983, this House appoints Mrs Prentice as a member of the National Archives of Australia Advisory Council for a period of three years.

Question agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (15:10): I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr MORRISON: Most egregiously.

The SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Mr MORRISON: In an article on 2 March, Bianca Hall wrote:

… Immigration Minister Scott Morrison claiming Labor senator Stephen Conroy keeps showing "how small a man he is' …

I have said many things about Senator Conroy; that he had undertaken a coward's sledge against General Campbell and other things, but I never said that. What I said—and I refer to the Hansard—was:

The Leader of the Opposition in his response to this motion today has demonstrated how small a man he is when the challenge is put to him.

I have another personal explanation, Madam Speaker, if I may?

The SPEAKER: You will keep this one much tighter.

Mr MORRISON: I will. Thank you. It was reported on the weekend, in the same publication by the same journalist, that my department had a team of 66 strong 'spin doctors'—their words. I can confirm that there are only 39.7 full-time equivalent staff employed in that area of my department. The number under the previous government when we came to office was 44.6.

Mr Husic: Why didn't you answer the query? That is not an explanation. He refused to answer the journalist's inquiries. You can't—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley is out of order.

Mr Husic: But spot on.

The SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the House.
Mr Pyne: He is very rude, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, assuming we are moving on—you have nothing else?

The SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the House, yes.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:12): I move:

That orders of the day Nos 2 and 3, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the Address be agreed to.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (15:12): I rise to speak to the Address-in-Reply to Her Excellency the Governor-General. It is an honour to speak again on this matter. My previous address-in-reply was my first speech in this place in October 2010, and I congratulate the new member for Griffith and all my new colleagues who have given their first speech during this debate.

Following the custom adopted by many of my colleagues, I will use this opportunity to provide the parliament with an update on some of the programs I have implemented in Bennelong and also a short review following the results of last September's federal election.

In my first speech I said:

Opportunity is the first essential ingredient to achieve success.

... ...

To realise our country’s full potential, every Australian must have the opportunity to compete and earn just reward for their effort and success.

I remain grateful for the opportunities provided to me throughout my life. In this role, as legislators, we are endowed with an important task of ensuring those less fortunate than ourselves are also provided opportunities to succeed in life. It is, therefore, most appropriate that the first local program I will talk about, and also the one I am most proud of, is the Bennelong Gardens Project.

As patron to the disability services organisation Achieve Australia, and also as an ambassador for Lifeline, I developed this project as a way to empower those in our community suffering from debilitating health issues, to give them the opportunity to take ownership over a local venture, with the aim to build it into a rewarding and profitable exercise. The Bennelong Gardens project seeks to utilise unused public land to establish commercial market gardens operated and owned by people with disabilities. Retirees are also invited to participate as a way to facilitate active recreation and social engagement, and to give a new sense of purpose to their lives. For their continuous support of the Bennelong Gardens project, I thank Michael Trail of Social Ventures Australia, Anne Bryce and Sunita Menezes of Achieve Australia, Tristan Harris of Harris Farms, Patrick Soars from Australian Native Landscapes, Sue Dennett of Karonga schools and Martin Wren from Nova
Employment. We look forward to receiving support from the New South Wales state government in the form of approving sites that we have identified. No pressure—yesterday would have been just fine!

I entered this parliament on the back of many years as a small business operator, following my father’s lifetime of experience in this most difficult but most rewarding of sectors. While distributing ANZAC brochures to local businesses in 2012 in some of our 20 villages, there was a tale of woe being repeated by nearly every business owner. The complaint was: ‘These are the toughest times we have ever had to endure.’ The dominance of the major retail players had left many in despair, contemplating capitulation. Shortly after my election in 2010, I commenced the Bennelong Village Business initiative, or BVB. This was designed to help local business owners by providing a platform for a collective approach to marketing the unique services they provide to the community. Inspired by Prime Minister Abbott’s direct action philosophy, we formed Bennelong Village Businesses to gain a collective power to negotiate on the part of some 350 traders in 20 villages. The first result was a 33 per cent discount for advertising in our local paper, John Booth’s *The Weekly Times*. Then more assistance came from Boehringer Ingelheim with marketing and design of our brochures, which were letterbox-dropped throughout the community.

In 2012 I moved a motion in this place for which I was grateful to receive bipartisan support. The motion formally recognised the significant contribution that Australian Chinese have made to our nation’s modern multicultural society. The motion noted the strong history of Chinese migration to Australia throughout the past 200 years, and the vibrant festivities and events hosted by the Bennelong Chinese community and enjoyed by people from all cultures in the region. Over the past month, I have been fortunate to attend many community events as part of the lunar New Year, with our strong and vital Chinese and Korean communities coming together to treat us to a magnificent program of celebrations as we farewelled the Year of the Snake and welcomed the Year of the Horse.

One of the local events I developed in early 2011 has become a growing annual celebration. This is the Bennelong Cup Table Tennis competition, which grew out of the Bennelong Schools Table Tennis Program. This program was developed to engage students from a variety of cultural backgrounds through the sport of table tennis. Hyundai generously agreed to sponsor the provision of table-tennis tables and equipment to all 40 schools in the electorate of Bennelong, which has one of the largest Chinese communities in Australia. The Bennelong Cup has become an annual event and sees top table-tennis players from China, Korea, Japan and Australia compete to promote social engagement through their sport.

In September last year, I received a strong vote of support from the people of Bennelong. The support I received from across my electorate is a product of both my ongoing work as a local member and the strong national leadership of Prime Minister Abbott, who leads a united and focused team. Former member for Bennelong and Prime Minister John Howard once said, ‘All politics is local.’ The people of Bennelong have elected me and this government with a mandate to govern in the best interests of our nation—to provide a safe and secure Australia, to return to the levels of hope, reward and opportunities that we grew accustomed to during the Howard era.

I commit to the good people of Bennelong, from Ermingon to Chatswood West, from North Epping to Meadowbank, from Carlingford to Gladesville and from Eastwood to East
Ryde, to continue to serve as a representative for the entire electorate, to work hard for you, for your businesses and for your families. We will face many challenges over the coming years as our economy is put back on track. By working together, we will develop a stronger community and a better future for our next generation.

As every member in this place will agree, elections are gruelling tests of our dedication to the task and to our community whilst trying to balance the needs of our families and those close to us. I was very fortunate to receive an abundance of assistance and tireless dedication from a large team of campaign workers. I have thanked each and every one of them personally but wish to reiterate my appreciation to them on the parliamentary record.

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (15:20): It is a pleasure to speak in the address-in-reply debate. Back in November 2013, the Governor-General gave her speech for the new government in this parliament. It has now been five long months since that election. Since then, we have seen from the coalition what can only be described as one of the most catastrophic starts to a new government in political history. We have a government that has spent three years opposing everything but standing for nothing. Australian voters are now experiencing a bit of buyer's regret as this government has shown it is not the government Australian people voted for. The honeymoon period that new governments should expect is long since over.

I start by talking about the electorate of McEwen, which I have been re-elected to represent. It is an honour to be standing here, having been given the trust of the many communities who make up the seat of McEwen, and to be the first Labor member to retain McEwen in 25 years since the late, great Peter Cleeland. There are quite a few people who I need to personally thank with regard to my election campaign. Firstly, to my ever-supportive family, Lisa, Rachael, Mum and Dad, Glenda, Sharyn, Meagan, Jessica, Elly, David, Geoff, Belinda, Brooke and Jaya—and I note that, at 16 years old, it was Brooke's first election campaign and she did a fantastic job: your constant support and understanding throughout this period was amazing. I could not have done this without you. To my staff during the election, Josh, Jeni, Gareth, Chris and Hailey: your hard work around the clock, your camaraderie, your intelligence and your humour were invaluable. I also pay tribute to the Labor branch members of McEwen: the ever-reliable Carmel and her wonderful family, who answered Mum's call seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and Santo, Tom, Jon, Gurri, Casey, Stephen, Rex, Pam, Spiro, Stephen, Phil and of course Big Andy, who always made sure the table was empty when he finished.

I would like to especially thank the 300-plus volunteers who helped out during the election campaign and on election day. They took time out of their own lives to help us, to help the cause, and I am truly grateful. I will continue to work tirelessly for the communities of McEwen, ensuring that the trust and the faith they have again placed in me will be entirely justified. The people of McEwen re-elected me as their voice, and I will ensure that that voice is heard.

On 7 September 2013 a shadow was cast over this great country of ours. The Abbott government came into power and, with that, all the futures, hopes and dreams, not to mention the livelihoods of millions of Australians, came into doubt. That fear has become a reality for many families. The coalition government causes great concern for many Australians, particularly those in the seat of McEwen. They are concerned for their jobs, the environment
and, more recently, our standing on the international stage. It would be easy to dismiss those concerns if they were not so consistent and happening right across the nation.

We have seen a government come into power on the strength of a few negative three-word slogans but, in reality, they are very far from doing what they promised—which I will talk more about later on. Even in the first few months since coming to power, the Abbott government have delivered nothing but a long line of broken promises and policy backflips. Unfortunately for the people of Australia, we now have a Prime Minister who is opposed to the fair go for all and helping those in our community who are most in need.

For the people of McEwen, their needs are inherent, varied and significant. McEwen is a disparate electorate. Since its creation in 1984, McEwen has straddled the two major political parties. It has always been a very marginal seat due to the wide-ranging demographics. In fact, McEwen has always been one of the most marginal seats in Australia. While it is a predominantly rural electorate in size, containing areas like Kilmore and Seymour, it also contains some of the fastest-growing municipalities in Victoria such as Craigieburn, Sunbury and Mernda. We have a community of over 104,000 people who, under Labor, have seen considerable investment in health care, education, jobs, communications, infrastructure and community facilities. One important point to mention here is that investment of this scale was never delivered during 14 years of continuous Liberal representation.

In the 3½ years that I have been the member for McEwen, Labor has provided almost $30 million in funding for hospitals, health clinics and local health practices. A major example of this is the $9.2million Wallan superclinic, which opened its doors in December 2013. This clinic was one the new government wanted scrapped. With a lack of all-round health services available to those in and around Wallan, the Wallan superclinic now provides a range of health services, such as improved access to general practice consultations, nursing, dietetics, podiatry, speech pathology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, paediatric, mental health and counselling services. We also invested $4.95 million towards the Macedon Ranges Community Health Facility in Gisborne, under the HHF regional priority round. This was actually opposed by the new government but, now that it is being rolled out, they are suddenly all too keen to claim the glory by getting their picture taken during sod-turning ceremonies. The question is: will they acknowledge that, without a Labor government, the community would not have seen this facility delivered?

We implemented the Building the Education Revolution initiative across all schools in all parts of the electorate. This program delivered crucial and much-wanted science and learning centres, language and learning centres, classrooms, libraries and sporting facilities, along with a hydrotherapy pool for children and those in the wider community with special needs. These investments in jobs, investments in education and investments in our communities have delivered facilities and opportunities for regional communities that no other government before us had ever delivered.

I recall having parents, teachers and members of the wider community tell me of the excitement in watching new facilities being built at their schools for the first time in 30 years. Parents and families had come and spent their weekends participating in working bees to further enhance existing buildings, lifting them towards the standards that the BER buildings had delivered. I was particularly pleased to deliver the $11 million trade training centre across the McEwen electorate. This TTC is a prime example of how public, Catholic and
independent schools can collaborate, with their focus being the aspirations of their students and delivering opportunities for country kids—opportunities that they could never receive under Liberal and National governments.

Labor spent hundreds of millions of dollars to upgrade roads and infrastructure across McEwen—a prime example being the $525 million spent on the M80 Ring Road upgrade. There is also the $400 million Post Entry Quarantine facility to go ahead in McEwen, which will give us a new and more advanced quarantine facility for this nation—not to mention the hundreds of new jobs that will be delivered.

I look forward to delivering more and more enhanced services in this term of office, but this will also involve the ongoing task of holding this government accountable for the promises they made to the people of McEwen during the 2013 election campaign. This will be no mean feat since, as mentioned, the government have already demonstrated their ability to break promises and undertake extraordinary tactics to turn their backs on the people of Australia. During the election last year, the Liberal Party made dozens of promises to the people of McEwen. Out of the 14 local funding promises for infrastructure, transport and community projects, not one of these promises has been delivered. The community is rightly concerned these promises will not be kept, as they join a long list of Liberal promises never delivered. I have made numerous attempts to contact several members of the Abbott government in order to expedite their funding commitments. To date, I have been inundated with the sound of silence. When not being ignored by the Abbott government, I have received a blatant refusal to follow through on their election promises to the people of McEwen.

Mr Abbott and the Liberals are pulling the plug on the National Broadband Network fibre rollout in my electorate, affecting many communities, like Lancefield, Romsey, Sunbury, Craigieburn, Whittlesea, Eden Park, Wollert, Wallan and Kilmore. The result of this decision is enormous. We will become the electorate of the have-nots, and we have already seen people moving away from the electorate purely because they cannot get broadband access. Children in these areas will not have access to educational resources. Businesses will not have the same connectivity to customers and wholesalers alike. And, without government funding to expand mobile phone coverage in the same areas, communication to and from these communities will be even less. The Abbott government has a responsibility to these communities to ensure they have access to an NBN. I will not rest until every town in McEwen is connected, as it should be, by a national broadband network—not the hotchpotch set-up being touted by this government.

As mentioned earlier, McEwen is one of the fastest-growing electorates in Victoria, and being a rural based electorate means it has constant issues with mobile phone connectivity. It contains three of Australia's major transport routes: the Hume Highway, the Northern Highway and the Calder Highway. As we witnessed with the fires that ravaged our electorate three weeks ago, in an area that is very prone to bushfires and that survived the worst fires in this nation's history, mobile phone reception can mean the difference between life and death. The residents of McEwen rightly want improved mobile phone coverage addressed as a matter of priority.

During the election campaign the Abbott government announced a $100 million investment to expand the mobile coverage footprint and increase competition in regional Australia. The coalition also promised an extra $80 million to expand the mobile network along major
transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to natural disasters. But, even though we have more than met the criteria to receive funding to help address this problem, repeated requests that I and communities have made to government have fallen on deaf ears. In fact, to date, we have not received the courtesy of a reply or a response from the government on whether they will even consider these requests. I know that they hear me loud and clear but, in typical form, they are ignoring the real needs of real Australians.

In Seymour, in the north-east of McEwen, is the Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk, which was developed in honour of the 62,100 personnel who were part of the Australia's Vietnam War effort. Local community members, RSLs and organisations rallied together and created funding for the walk. After years of dedicated hard work by the community, the commemorative walk was unveiled to much emotion and much honour. This walk has enjoyed bipartisan support at the state level, was supported by the Mitchell Shire at the local level and was supported by Labor at the federal level. Unfortunately, in recent months, local serial vandals have desecrated the commemorative walk. These crimes could easily be prevented by enhanced security at the site. Security would have been provided under round 5 of RDAF if the Abbott government had not ripped the funding away. To be clear, it is only the Abbott government that continues not to support this iconic project. For less than the price of one of Mr Abbott's 'women of calibre' $75,000 paid parental leave bonuses, we could have a safe and secure Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk—an iconic destination for our much-loved Vietnam vets, their families and tourists alike. That is a kick in the teeth for the local community and the brave returned soldiers.

The government's complete disregard for working Australians can be no more evident than in the loss of thousands of jobs in manufacturing. Since the Abbott government was elected on that sad day in September 2013, over 10,000 direct jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector. Due to the government's complete ignorance of what manufacturing means to Australia, Ford, Holden and Toyota have decided to shut down their manufacturing arms in Australia. The ramifications of these closures cannot be measured in just numbers. Yes, we have the number of almost 45,000 direct jobs lost. Yes, we have the number of 150,000 indirect jobs lost. Yes, we have the shocking fact that under the Abbott government there is one job lost every three minutes. That is 150,000 people who have been, in the words of the Prime Minister, 'liberated' under this government.

What is the real cost to our community? Around 10,000 people in McEwen work in manufacturing. What about those local businesses who provided supplies to the companies now shutting up shop? What about the families whose standard of living relies on salaries earned in these jobs? What about the emotional and psychological effects on those workers and their families? The costs of these cannot be measured, but hardworking Australians will bear the brunt, with thanks to the Abbott government's policies. To add insult to injury, Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey have the gall to try and blame the workers for the demise of manufacturing.

It is in the Liberal Party's DNA to ensure that they hurt the lowest paid workers in this country. Their sly move to remove penalty rates, overtime, shift work allowance and public holiday pay is simply their way of reintroducing around-the-clock work and lengthening the working day—well, while we're at it, Mr Abbott, why don't we just remove weekends all together? They are creating a huge rising unemployment problem, which will force a race to
I firmly believe that Australian workers deserve penalty rates for working extended or unsocial hours. The seat of McEwen represents over 37,000 people who work in industries affected by unsociable hours, such as retail, health care, social work and hospitality, and of course the 10,000-plus who work in manufacturing. While I am mentioning it, a big shout out to the Victorian paramedics in the Code Red campaign for fighting the chaotic and dysfunctional Napthine government to try and get a fair day's pay for the work that they do. The idea that you should have to trade family and home time for nothing is not the Labor way. Whether it is about being able to go to a suburban footy game, see a play, do the kids' sporting circuit or, as many of us know, reduce the backlog of backyard chores when you get home, penalty rates are best protected through a modern award system.

Unlike those opposite, Labor will always stick up for workers' rights and will not trade them away like economic commodities. And we do not believe that 'any boss is better than no boss', as the Prime Minister once said. As the member for McEwen, as a member of the Labor party and as a member of the local community, I will ensure that everyone gets a fair go. In 1996 I attended Labor's campaign launch, and these words of Paul Keating rang true:

We will not adopt the fantastic hypocrisy of modern conservatism which preaches the values of families and communities, while conducting a direct assault on them through reduced wages and conditions and job security.

Those words were true then; those words are true now. This also includes access to Medicare without having to pay a tax simply for being sick. Universal health care is a right, not a privilege. For the thousands of families who are struggling to make ends meet, the additional costs of having a sick child or children could be crippling. It sickens me that the Prime Minister is more than happy to sneakily introduce this sick tax, leaving families having to choose between putting food on the table or taking their sick child to the doctor. My message, our message, to you, Mr Abbott, is: keep your hands off Medicare.

It is Labor governments that built this nation. Medicare, superannuation and, of course, the National Disability Insurance Scheme are some of our proudest achievements. It is Labor governments that built the infrastructure and social capacity that make this country great. It is those opposite who want to tear it down or sell it off. The big question for Australians is what will be left of our great nation once the conservative, morally bankrupt, Tea Party politicians on the other side have torn down and sold off the nation's silverware. Where will that leave us? In conclusion, I would like to reiterate how honoured I am to be re-elected. The Abbott government had best be prepared for a fight if they want to continue to keep turning their backs on the people of McEwen.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (15:37): I thank Her Excellency the Governor-General for outlining the direction and priorities of our new government: cutting taxes, reducing regulation, redefining the role of government and investing in 21st century broadband, roads and hospitals. If there is a single philosophical thread weaving all of these reforms together, surely it is this: that we on our side of politics believe that the role of government is to enable citizens to do their best, whereas our opponents on the Labor side believe that government's role is to tell citizens what is best. The stark difference that we see again and again through every policy area bears out the
importance and the significance of this distinction and the failures of the 'government knows best' approach which were so apparent in the last six years of Labor government. A touchstone of all of that is freedom, a belief in the individual, a belief that citizens, individuals, private businesses, are best able to chart their own destiny.

We see this very clearly in my own portfolio of communications. The rise of the internet, which became commercial, I suppose, 20 years ago and has gathered more and more momentum and more and more coverage, has revolutionised the communications world and the media world. Our laws and regulations and assumptions were all based around a series of platforms: newspapers, magazines, licensed broadcasters in radio and television, subscription television whether on cable or satellite. These great platforms were the only means by which people could communicate to the mass. They were the gatekeepers and they posed huge barriers to competition. Then the internet came along and devastated all of that. It provided a very cost-effective platform for advertising and so undermined significantly, materially, the business model of newspapers, particularly those like the big metropolitan broadsheets of yesteryear which depended on classified advertising. It takes on subscription television. People now can buy the programs, download the programs they want to watch when they want to watch them, from the internet. They do not have to buy a bundled package. Netflix arises to take on all of the cable TV companies in the United States and it has many imitators around the world. So these are revolutionary times.

We have all been very concerned especially about the damage to the newspaper business, not because any of us I hope are so naive as to be filled with a particular affection for newspapers or journalists as a group or proprietors as a group or shareholders of newspapers—all businesses have to deal with the travails of the world and adapt to them. But newspapers and journalists have a very fundamental role to play in our democracy, or I should say journalism does. The work that journalists do in a free media is just as important as any work that we do here in this chamber or in the other place as legislators or that the judiciary do or that the Public Service do in running the country. We cannot be a democracy without a free media. So the concern naturally was that as the resources were drained away from those newspapers which had been the big foundations of journalism so the quality of our democracy would diminish as the quality of journalism and the number of journalists, the resources available to journalism, were diminished too. That has been a matter of very real concern.

What we have also seen with the arrival of the internet is an opening up of competition on a scale that would have previously been unimaginable. If you think back 20 or 30 years, the idea of there being new newspapers to compete with The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, The Daily Telegraph or the Melbourne Herald Sun was fanciful. Every now and then some rich person would try and start their own newspaper to take on one of the established ones but it was generally a very unsuccessful effort. I am thinking of Lang Hancock in Perth and Robert Holmes a Court for a period. But what the internet has done is lowered the cost of entry into the media market. So at the same time as we have been lamenting the demise of the great beasts of the media jungle we have seen more competition than ever. We have seen The Guardian Online, we have seen The Mail Online. Out here we have seen the paper I launched on Friday, Morry Schwartz's The Saturday Paper, and so many others—a host of them, too many to name.
We had never had more competition and more diversity in our media world than we have today. Yet it is remarkable that under the previous government their obsession was with the technological constructs of the past. They said, 'Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation has the majority share of metropolitan daily newspaper circulation.' So it has had, for nearly 30 years since a Labor government enabled Mr Murdoch to buy the Herald and Weekly Times group. But that share of the total media and information pie represented by newspapers is getting smaller and smaller as more and more competitors come onto the scene. Yet it was precisely at that time—when a media landscape that had been frozen for decades suddenly started to thaw and was open to so much competition—that the Labor government wanted to constrain freedom and regulate the media in a way it had never been regulated before in peacetime.

So there is a fundamental difference between the way I am approaching this portfolio of communications and, indeed, the way the government is approaching this area and the way its Labor predecessor did. Labor believed that the arrival of the internet required more regulation and less freedom. We say that the arrival of the internet enables much more competition and therefore more freedom, and that therefore there is a need for less regulation not more. You could not have a starker difference between our government and its predecessor, and the difference is that we believe in freedom.

I note in passing that some commentators on the conservative or the right-wing side of the political debate have criticised me for launching Morry Schwartz's new paper *The Saturday Paper* on Friday. They apparently would like me to be—just as Senator Conroy was the minister for left-wing communications or the minister for communications that agree with the Labor Party—the minister for right-wing communications or communications that agree with the Liberal Party. And that is not the case. I am the Minister for Communications. I am the minister that seeks to ensure that we have the freest and most diverse media we can possibly manage. I am the minister that wants to take away the barriers to competition wherever I can so that as many voices can speak out as possible, and whether they are left or right is of no concern to me in my capacity as the Minister for Communications. As the member for Wentworth seeking re-election I may be disappointed if the anti-Liberal forces in the media call for me not to be elected; fair enough—that will be distressing at election time. But, in my ministerial capacity and in my role as the custodian of this vital portfolio in the government, my job is to stand up for freedom. Those who think that this Liberal minister should be like Senator Conroy and seek to persecute or suborn or bully those that do not agree with him have got it completely wrong; they are wrong in principle and they are wrong in practice. Everybody has a vested interest in freedom—everybody. Whether you are on the right or on the left, you have a vital, vested interest in freedom. As I said in one brief comment on the weekend to one of these critics, mangling Bill Clinton: 'It's the democracy, stupid!' It's the democracy—that is what we are committed to.

You see another example of the Labor Party's big-government obsession in their approach to broadband. The fundamental failure and mistake of the previous government—and it was a fundamental one and one that is impossible to reverse at this juncture, regrettably—was to be mad enough, genuinely mad enough, to imagine that the government was the right agency to build a new telecommunications network. It was back to the days of the postmaster-general. Every other comparable country in the world, in approaching the challenge of getting broadband services upgraded, has done this: they have encouraged the private sector to do the
job. They have provided judicious subsidies to ensure that people in remote or regional areas
got their services upgraded where it otherwise would not be commercial to do so. The virtue
of that is that it ensured that the government was up for a certain amount of money—a sum
certain. And all of the execution, the construction risk and the business risk was left with the
private sector. An excellent example of that—you do not have to look very far—is what John
Key did in New Zealand, or, indeed, what the British have done in the UK. There is a very
long list.

The craziness of the previous government's policy was, right from the jump, in having the
hubris, in defiance of experience both in Australia and everywhere else in the world, to
imagine that the government was the best party to do the job. So in Australia, in the socialist
paradise of Senator Conroy and Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd, we had a situation where the
execution and business risk of this vast project was entirely vested in the government—in the
taxpayer, in other words. And the only people that got the cheques, that got the certainty, were
in fact the telephone companies, Telstra and Optus, who sold their assets to the government—an extraordinary fundamental failure. So it is no surprise that the project has run late and it
has run over budget. Indeed, as Ziggy Switkowski observed just last week, so far the NBN Co
has invested $6.4 billion of taxpayers' money and, in its fibre rollout, passed less than two per
cent of the country.

The challenge that we have is that we are not in a position to turn back the clock. We are
not in a position to undo all of the mistakes the Labor Party has made. So what we have to do
is to mitigate the madness and to try to complete the project as quickly and cheaply and hence
as affordably as possible. As I said in question time, one of the consequences of the Labor
Party's approach of course would have been, had it been persevered with, that broadband
prices would have been up to 80 per cent higher. There is no magic in that; there is nothing
unusual in that: if you have a massively expensive, overcapitalised government monopoly
with no competition to keep it honest, you are going to get very high prices. You do not get
cheap prices by overcapitalising a business, especially if it is a monopoly.

I noticed earlier the member for McEwen speaking about his electorate and saying that
people had been moving away because of lack of broadband. He should really raise that with
his colleagues, because in six years of Labor virtually nothing was done. There was the best
part of two million premises without access to broadband in 2007, and there has only been a
tiny chip into that in the intervening six years. And then, I might say, with a chutzpah that is
quite epic, he went on to complain that there were mobile phone black spots in his electorate.
No doubt there are, and that is one of the reasons why the coalition government, the Abbott
government, has allocated $100 million to address them—or to address as many as we can
with that sum of money. But it is worth noting that in six years of the Labor government not
one cent was spent to fix mobile black spots.

It is the same point about regional and remote broadband subsidies. It is the same point that
you have areas where there is no mobile phone reception. As we all know, this is by far the
biggest complaint—as you would know in particular, Deputy Speaker Scott, from your
electorate of Maranoa—and by far the biggest telecommunications concern in rural and
regional Australia. In those areas, of course, because of the small population, it is not
necessarily economic for the telcos to make the investment, so there is a role for government,
but in six years not one cent was spent by Labor on upgrading or addressing mobile phone
black spots. But, to date, $6.4 billion has been invested in passing less than two per cent of premises in Australia.

I have spoken earlier about the other critical issue, but it bears repeating. It is this issue of affordability. It is no good having the best broadband technology in the world, which enables a household of six to engage in simultaneous high-definition interactive cybergaming across the world—there is no point having that—if battlers cannot afford it.

Mr Husic interjecting—

Mr Turnbull: The member for Chifley is interjecting away there because he does not like to know the truth. The truth is that there are many people in his electorate who cannot afford broadband today, and he in his hubris has turned his back on them and supported a broadband policy that will make broadband less affordable than it is today. Forty-one per cent of the least well off households, the lowest income households, the households with the lowest 20 per cent of income in Australia, do not have access to the internet at home. Four per cent of the top 20 per cent do. What do you reckon the difference is? I think it is all about affordability, don't you? You do not have to be a rocket scientist to work that out. And yet, there was Labor—in a manner calculated, inevitably—determined to make broadband less affordable than it already is. That was the inevitable consequence, as night follows day. If you overcapitalise a business and you render it immune from competition, that will result in higher prices. There is no alternative.

And that is the critical objective of our government when it comes to the NBN: to get this project finished, to ensure that people everywhere have access to very fast broadband, using the mix of technologies—in common with all of the other major developed countries: the United States, the UK, Germany, Belgium, France; take your pick—that will ensure that we have a broadband network that is built nearly four years sooner and $32 billion less expensively and, above all, to make it more affordable.

Labor's arrogant indifference to the position of the people that they claim to represent, the least well off Australians, is truly chilling. It really is truly chilling. Labor's policy would result in average broadband prices increasing by $43 a month, increasing by up to 80 per cent a month. That is the fact. They can run around, wave their arms and talk about gigabits and gigabytes. They can do all of that. They can talk about all these things, which most of them do not understand. And yet the bottom line is this, and we all know it, whether we are in big business or little business: you give the Labor Party a project like this to manage and they will make a hash of it. You overcapitalise a government monopoly and you will get higher prices, and the consequence is that a vital service which has been unaffordable for many to date will become unaffordable to many more in the future.

Ms Parke (Fremantle) (15:57): In this debate on the address-in-reply, I would like to make some comments about Australia's investment in its future, specifically its investment in the protection of our environment and biodiversity and its investment in the clean and sustainable industries that should be the basis of economic activity in the decades ahead. Like many people, I am concerned that under this government Australia will turn away from the fundamental understanding that our environment is not something to be considered simply as a resource to be tapped or churned but is in fact the foundation of our future wellbeing in every aspect: social, physical and emotional, as well as economic.
On this point I note the submission the Australian Conservation Foundation has made in relation to the 2014-15 federal government budget. That submission includes reference to the observation from Treasury's *Intergenerational report* from 2011 that 'few countries have incorporated the potential impact of policies related to environmental issues into the long-term fiscal projections'. Needless to say, Australia is not one of those few countries.

I am concerned that under this government we are already seeing a rapid retreat from the significant gains made by the Labor government when it comes to tackling climate change, improving marine conservation, improving environmental regulation as a whole and supporting renewable energy and energy efficiency. There seems little doubt that the government's role as the custodian of our shared environmental wealth and as the way finder on what should be our path to sustainable economic and social wellbeing is in the process of being abdicated by the coalition. This abdication is occurring across the spectrum of government responsibility. It is occurring when it comes to environmental regulation. It is occurring on the expenditure side when it comes to government support and investment. And it is occurring on the revenue side when it comes to the price on carbon, the introduction of an emissions trading scheme and the receipt of a fair contribution from the profits of resources companies.

Australians understand that if you want to invest in a burgeoning sustainability sector the funds have to exist to make that investment, just as public investment was once made in the creation of our existing stationary energy and distribution infrastructure. Australians understand that if you want to minimise the costs associated with climate change there needs to be structural reform to ensure that carbon emitters are responsible for the costs they have produced.

Why price carbon? The answer is from a first-year economics principle. Pricing the externality is the most efficient way to reduce the externality. As Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund, put it last week, externality has a cost. We can either deal with that cost by putting a price on it and allowing the market and companies to innovate to reduce emissions in the most efficient way for their business, or we can allow the externality to not be priced and emissions to continue. In the latter scenario, the cost will be borne by the government, the taxpayer and, ultimately, all of the community.

People want effective action. They want it to be achieved at least cost and they want it to be paid for by a fair and effective mechanism. The whole rationale of an emissions trading scheme is that the burden of addressing the impact of carbon pollution falls on the polluters, with a corresponding market impetus for business and households alike to reduce carbon emissions.

The Abbott government's Direct Action policy has three massive flaws: firstly, it is quite possible they will not achieve the reduction target of five per cent on 2000 levels by 2020 to which we have committed. In other words, it will fail its basic purpose. Secondly, it will be paid for by the taxpayer, with no contribution from the polluters themselves and no encouragement for polluters to reduce their emissions other than in the form of payments from the taxpayer to do so. And thirdly, it is a matter of common agreement that Direct Action is the most expensive way to seek a reduction in carbon emissions. Prime Minister Abbott has already indicated that if the Direct Action policy costs grow beyond his expectations, which everyone predicts they will, then the target itself will be moderated.
It is instructive to remember the environmental, social and economic task we are engaged in here. The existing reduction targets that form the basis of our commitment are designed to limit the average temperature increase to two degrees over the course of this century. To give a sense of how two degrees of warming—while significant and harmful in itself—is possible to manage while a higher temperature rise is not, I refer to a comment by Professor John Schellnhuber, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, on the difference between two degrees and four degrees of warming. He says:

The difference is human civilisation. A 4 degree C temperature increase probably means a global [population] carrying capacity below 1 billion people.

It is a sobering statement. I am grateful to have encountered it in John Wiseman's excellent essay Climate change: reconnecting politics with reality from the collection Pushing our Luck: ideas for Australian progress.

At this point, it is relevant to note that last week the Climate Change Authority provided its latest update, which recommends that Australia target a minimum 15 per cent reduction. Labor provided for the need to go higher than five per cent. It seems overwhelmingly clear that much higher reductions are essential and should have been committed to before now. It was nearly two years ago that the World Bank, in its Turn Down the Heat report, stated that:

Even with the current mitigation commitments and pledges fully implemented, there is roughly a 20 percent likelihood of exceeding 4°C by 2100. If they are not met, a warming of 4°C could occur as early as the 2060s.

That is why we need to keep the gravity of this issue front and centre of the national policy conversation in Australia.

The former Labor government was both clear and courageous in establishing a mechanism that properly attributed the cost of carbon pollution and properly derived the revenue necessary to support Australia's shift from a high-carbon to a low-carbon economy—from a traditional hydrocarbon energy production profile to a 21st century traditional and renewable energy mix. Unfortunately, the current government is abandoning that project, and I am concerned that the forthcoming budget will be a document of irresponsibility and neglect on that front.

As I said earlier, acting in the long-term interest of the Australian environment—and indeed the global environment, if you consider our oceans and our climate—requires sound economic management. In fact, such action epitomises sound economic management. Spending money to save the environment is not largesse—it is sensible and prudent action. It is taking out insurance for our children and their children. It is easy to cut these programs now. Trim $650 million from the Murray Darling Basin Plan over the forward estimates and perhaps it inflates your budget bottom line. But what is the long-term cost of this?

Consider for a moment what the science is telling us about the impacts of climate change. If no action is taken there will be a cost to government across a range of budgetary areas—roads and infrastructure, health and environment to name just a few. What will this do for the budget bottom line? Pricing carbon allows us to deal with this challenge now while also allowing our economy to grow. It decouples economic growth from pollution. Australia has recorded uninterrupted growth for 22 years and yet last financial year was the first time this occurred without a corresponding increase in pollution.
Many stakeholders with an active advocacy role in this space show the kind of balance and responsibility needed to achieve change: that is, they are prepared to look at where the revenue will come from in order to underwrite the investments needed. The budget submission I mentioned earlier, from the Australian Conservation Foundation, is a perfect example. That submission identifies savings that are nearly ten times the investments that ACF would like to see made in Australia's sustainable future. Of course, that is possible because the creation and encouragement of greater sustainability is not just about policy settings that fund renewable energy, green infrastructure or water resource research. Greater sustainability and resilience can also be pursued or achieved by ensuring that outmoded or unjustified concessions do not persist in relation to activities or practices that run counter to the principles of a sustainable economy.

Almost two years ago the now Treasurer, standing in London, boldly declared the end of the age of entitlement. The largesse of government would come to an end, he said, and Australians, both households and businesses, would need to stand on their own two feet. We were told companies should not look for government subsidies or support. Yet at the same time, they propose to spend billions of taxpayers' dollars subsiding polluters through a faux climate policy, which no expert believes will meet the emissions reductions targets. The viability gap between clean energy and dirty, which was closing but will now yawn wide again, will continue to be defined as much by the outrageous subsidies for hydrocarbon production and consumption as by the withdrawal of support for renewables and energy efficiency.

As the ACF submission points out it is hard to understand, let alone justify, why special and favourable depreciation rules for oil and gas assets were reintroduced in the early 2000s, after they had been removed as a trade-off for the substantial lowering of the company tax rate. The existing fuel tax credit scheme, which cost $6 billion in 2013-14, is currently the government's 14th most expensive program, costing more than federal government spending on schools. The ACF makes the case for reducing and better targeting this massive concession, with savings of two-thirds by 2016-17. There are aviation fuel concessions and counterproductive exemptions to fossil fuel producers through the Energy Security Fund that could also add up to $2 billion to the budget bottom line. It is common sense that, if you want to encourage a diversified and low-emission energy production profile, you go about that task by supporting renewable energy innovation and/or by ensuring that fossil fuel production and consumption is not unduly buoyed by unwarranted and counterproductive—or, if you like, countersustainable—concessions and subsidies.

On that basis, I urge the government to approach the forthcoming budget with the following in mind: first, that Australia's future wellbeing depends at least as much on the health of our environment as on sustainable economic growth; second, that addressing climate change by reducing carbon emissions at a much faster rate is essential and it is urgent; third, that the investment needed to improve resilience and sustainability should be funded from revenue derived by the application of a fair impost on carbon pollution and resource extraction; and, fourth and finally, that progress towards a low-carbon Australia and an Australia that is a leader in renewable energy production and innovation can be hastened by ensuring a level playing field without undue subsidies or concessions for fossil fuels.

I return to the wise words of Mr Wiseman, from the essay I referred to earlier:
The economic growth debate is … best framed not in terms of 'growth' versus 'degrowth' but as a shift in priorities from limitless growth in the consumption of energy and resources to improvement in important social and ecological priorities. In *Prosperity without growth: Economics for a finite planet*, UK economist Tim Jackson makes a compelling argument that our ability to 'decouple' conventional economic growth from ecological destruction is highly questionable and that our focus must be on a redefinition of prosperity— a vision 'in which it is possible for human beings to flourish, to achieve greater social cohesion, to find higher levels of wellbeing and yet still to reduce their material impact on the environment.'

I know that kind of reframing represents a big change. I know it represents a shift from the current state of play, in which we remain fixed on the idea that growth can and should continue indefinitely— however much basic logic tells us it cannot be so. In a brilliant book entitled *A Short History of Progress*, Ronald Wright notes the lessons of the past:

That the health of land and water—and of woods, which are the keepers of water—can be the only lasting basis for any civilization's survival and success … If civilisation is to survive it must live on the interest, not the capital of nature.

He goes on to say:

Capitalism lures us onward like the mechanical hare before the greyhounds, insisting that the economy is infinite and sharing therefore is irrelevant. Just enough greyhounds catch a real hare now and then to keep the others running till they drop. In the past, it was only the poor who lost this game, now it is the planet …

Things are moving so fast that inaction itself is one of the biggest mistakes. The 10,000-year experiment of the settled life will stand or fall by what we do, and don't do, now. The reform that is needed is not anti-capitalist, anti-American, or even deep environmentalist; it is simply the transition from short-term to long-term thinking. From recklessness and excess to moderation and the precautionary principle.

The great advantage we have, our best chance for avoiding the fate of past societies, is that we know about those past societies. We can see how and why they went wrong. Homo sapiens has the information to know itself for what it is: an Ice Age hunter only half-evolved towards intelligence; clever but seldom wise.

We are now at the stage when the Easter Islanders could still have halted the senseless cutting and carving, could have gathered the last trees' seeds to plant out of reach of the rats. We have the tools and the means to share resources, clean up pollution, dispense basic health care and birth control, set economic limits in line with natural ones.

If we don't do these things now, while we prosper, we will never be able to do them when times get hard. Our fate will twist out of our hands.

On behalf of my community in Fremantle and communities throughout Australia, I want to be one of the many people who are prepared to have this conversation and to argue the merits of taking a radically different, massively important shift in perspective.

**Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (16:12):** I rise to speak on this address-in-reply. First, I want to acknowledge the great honour and trust that the people of Higgins have placed in me to be their representative, to represent their issues both big and small. It is an honour that I have been granted three times now and I am very, very conscious of the great responsibility that comes with this incredible honour.

The key function and task of our government will be to repair the nation's balance sheet so we again live within our means, as we did during the previous coalition government, the Howard-Costello years. We need to be able to turn the deficits into surpluses and to start
repaying the debt so that our children and their children do not inherit a parlous economic situation where they are restricted in the services that are provided to them as a result of the financial mismanagement of their forebears.

One of the critical tasks for us in repairing the national balance sheet will be to encourage business to grow, invest and employ. One of the critical aspects here is to ensure that we have the right productivity-enhancing infrastructure available to us. This brings me to the first point that I wish to raise in the House today—that is, railway crossings in my seat of Higgins and the state of Victoria.

While historically Melbourne has benefited from thoughtful planning, there remain 172 level crossings within the metropolitan area, as compared to eight within Sydney. Many of these crossings are positioned on Melbourne's busiest roads, adjacent to major arterials such as the Monash Freeway and the Dandenong Road-Princes Highway. These level crossings cause substantial delays to motorists, road based freight and road based public transport—15 to 40 minutes during peak times—while, at the same time, limiting growth in rail based public transport due to capacity constraints.

The Dandenong railway line currently serves over a million people in south-eastern Melbourne and is considered a key area for future population growth; it also serves industrial and commercial sites through to Dandenong and thereafter the proposed deepwater port of Hastings. Along the Dandenong rail corridor, within Higgins and bordering Chisholm and Hotham, the hands-down, single largest issue facing constituents on a daily basis is level crossings. It influences key decisions: where people will shop, where they will send their children to school and how they will access work.

The 2012 RACV Redspot survey ranks three Higgins level crossings in Victoria's top 10 worst sites for congestion. They are Murrumbeena Road, Murrumbeena, at No. 1; Koornang Road, Carnegie, at No. 4; and Burke Road, Glen Iris, at No. 5. Key stakeholders, including the RACV and the Committee for Melbourne, share the view with me that planning and investment, both public and private, are now required to ensure south-eastern Melbourne continues to grow.

In June 2013, I tabled a petition with 1,151 signatures which drew the attention of the House to the severe congestion caused by the regular closure of the level crossings along the Dandenong railway line and I asked at that time that parliament give greater priority to their removal. In total, there are 21 railway stations and nine level crossings in the electorate of Higgins. They are along the Dandenong railway line; Grange Road, Carnegie; Koornang Road, Carnegie; Murrumbeena Road, Murrumbeena; Poath Road, Hughesdale; along the Glen Waverley line; Glenferrie Road, Kooyong; Toorak Road, Kooyong; Tooronga Road, Malvern; Burke Road, Glen Iris; and High Street, Glen Iris.

The Victorian government's 2011 Infrastructure Australia submission, resubmitted in 2012 for the Nation Building Program, notes that the catchment area of this rail corridor contributed $92 billion in 2007-08, accounting for roughly half of Melbourne's GDP or nine per cent nationally. The Victorian government has sought support from Infrastructure Australia and the previous Commonwealth government for $30 million to enable initial planning and development work for the Dandenong rail upgrade, including the removal of its 12 level crossings, which would have the potential to lift rail passenger capacity by nearly 100 per cent—that is, 11,000 people per hour—and significantly reduce road congestion, as well
as $16 million to enable planning for a broad-ranging level-crossing removal program across Melbourne.

In total the Victorian government is spending just over $418 million, but received nothing from the Commonwealth in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 federal budgets for level-crossing removal. I congratulate my state colleagues for focusing on this issue, after the failure of previous Labor governments that squandered the surpluses that they inherited and the GST windfalls that they also inherited—which they did not invest in this productivity-enhancing infrastructure. The Victorian coalition government is in the process of removing 12 level crossings, which is the largest number of level-crossing removals by any Victorian government in the state's history. In particular, I am pleased that the state has commenced planning for the removal of crossings at Burke Road, Glen Iris and Murrumbeena Road, Murrumbeena, both of which are within Higgins. The removal of a level crossing can cost up to $200 million. However, the need for varied solutions to level-crossing removals depends upon site opportunity and constraints as well as the need to explore private sector investment. There is also broad agreement as to the nature of this problem and the need for action. How these projects are to be funded remains less clear. There are varied funding options that should be considered, including private sector involvement—for example, in the development of air rights where appropriate. Importantly, though, the removal of level crossings is as much about road congestion as it is about rail. For this reason, I believe that it is important that Victoria receive its fair share of the infrastructure dollar provided federally through Infrastructure Australia.

The second issue which I wish to raise in the House this afternoon, in the time available to me, also relates to our economy and jobs. It is about job participation and increasing the participation of women, in particular, in the workforce. We know through the reports released by the Grattan Institute that if we can increase female participation in the workplace up to the same level as some of our OECD competitor countries, such as Canada and Germany, we will have an economic gain of up to $25 billion. What is standing in the way of this?

Affordable and flexible child care that is accessible to families is one of the key complaints I hear from constituents in my electorate of Higgins. Higgins is a much sought after area in which to care for and raise children. However, the previous Labor government made it more difficult to get affordable child care and local families are paying the price of the previous Labor government's legacy. Recent Department of Education figures indicate that childcare fees rose an average $70 per week over the six years of the former Labor government. On average, child care now costs over $3,000 a year more than it did before Labor came to power. There can be no doubt about the very real impact that this is having on family budgets. The June quarter 2013 Child care and early learning in summary report comes on the back of a recent review which found new regulations introduced by Labor added $2,000 in operating costs per child per year for an average sized long day care centre.

After speaking with childcare providers in Higgins, many have told me that the extra burden of regulation is unnecessarily forcing up costs and taking valuable time away from looking after the children. These costs are passed on to parents, many of whom query whether it is worth going back to work at all. However, it is not just formal long day care child care that has fared badly under the previous Labor government. I have visited many kindergartens and occasional-care centres in Higgins and spoken at length with families, staff and
management regarding the increase in mandatory regulation that impacts directly on staffing, fees and access for families.

I have previously tabled a petition in the parliament with regard to the reduction in Take A Break occasional-care funding and hosted a forum with the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in his former role as shadow parliamentary secretary for supporting families, the Hon. Jamie Briggs MP. All this has assisted to inform our understanding of the difficulties faced by the early learning sector and the very urgent need for change.

While our government has already started the process of reducing red tape, these new figures with respect to childcare fees back our decision to task the Productivity Commission to find a way to deliver more affordable, accessible child care in Higgins. All options are on the table and helping women stay in the workforce, or get back into the workforce, is something everyone in this House should support.

I turn to another issue which has been very significant in my electorate of Higgins—that is, community safety. Higgins is an electorate comprised of urban villages. Within those villages, law and order is definitely an issue of concern. In the western suburbs of Prahran, Windsor and South Yarra, which are home to the Chapel Street nightclub precinct, security issues do arise where entertainment and residential areas intersect.

I was particularly pleased when the Prime Minister, the Hon. Tony Abbott, then Leader of the Opposition, and the then Premier, Premier Baillieu, visited Higgins in August of 2012 to see firsthand the concerns of residents and to announce that federal funding for CCTV cameras in the local Chapel Street precinct was part of our $50 million funding for the coalition’s Plan for Safer Streets. I was also very pleased to have the support of Inspector Adrian White from the Prahran Police Station, Oskar Cebergs from Chapel Street precinct, Justin Zakis, President, Lara Barry Residents Association, as well as local residents.

In total, $100,000 has been secured to increase security measures in this busy precinct and I am working with local government to ensure its smooth implementation. In addition, following a long and productive dialogue with residents, local businesses and traders in the south-eastern part of my electorate, it became clear that measures to improve security of persons and property would be welcome in the Carnegie area, a popular family-friendly cosmopolitan suburb. As a result, I was able to secure an additional $100,000 for Koornang Road, Carnegie, which has been warmly welcomed by the Carnegie traders and local businesses, along with residents.

While no-one would argue that CCTV and increased lighting will eradicate crime and anti-social behaviour, I believe they will form a deterrent and, if crime occurs, assist Victoria Police in apprehending those responsible.

Since these announcements the Ashburton traders have also expressed some interest in having closed-circuit television cameras in their High Street shopping strip and I am working with them to ascertain whether any future options exist for increased security measures there.

I now turn to an issue which is incredibly close to my heart, a very special organisation in my electorate of Higgins. This organisation does good work not only for those who reside in Higgins but also for those from throughout Victoria. It is aptly named Very Special Kids. It is an eight-bed children's hospice that provides planned and emergency end-of-life care, as well
as flexible family support programs, including respite for families with children with life-threatening illnesses.

The organisation was established in 1985 after two local families recognised there was a need to support other families experiencing the loss and grief associated with having a child diagnosed with a life-threatening condition. Throughout this period, it has been championed by the founder and patron, Sister Margaret Noone, AM, and grown under the careful stewardship of a committed and talented board. Very Special Kids is not only Australia's oldest and largest children's hospice but also the only children's hospice in Australia to receive no federal government funding. The other two hospices—Bear Cottage in New South Wales and Hummingbird House in Queensland—receive substantial support from the Commonwealth government.

All Very Special Kids services are offered free-of-charge to families. It has an operating budget of just over $5.6 million per annum, 70 per cent of which is generated through philanthropy, with the remaining 30 per cent provided by the state government. However, in order to increase the occupancy of existing facilities and to increase the services to families in Melbourne and in rural and regional Victoria, Very Special Kids is actively seeking greater government support. The work Very Special Kids undertakes is truly important and difficult. In many ways, it is an organisation with which no family would wish to become familiar, yet so many Victorians are very grateful for the services and support they provide at the most difficult and challenging of times.

Very Special Kids has a very special CEO, Susan Hosking, and it is an organisation for which I have the utmost respect. I intend to do everything that I can humanly do to ensure it receives the support it needs to continue to provide its amazing services, not just to my constituents but to all Victorian families.

In the time remaining, I would like to raise the issue many people raised with me at the mobile office meetings I have held throughout the electorate during my four years as a member of parliament, an issue which I know will be challenging for this government—housing affordability. Higgins is very diverse in nature, with high-density inner-city living in the west and family-friendly suburbs in the east, all within a commutable distance of the Melbourne central business district. Despite some perceptions, it is very diverse in its demography. A third of Higgins residents were born outside Australia. While undoubtedly some people have significant means, Higgins also has a high percentage of people who live in rented accommodation, including nearly 1,000 who live in state housing dwellings. While the median weekly household income is $1,741, the median monthly mortgage repayment is $2,393; and the median price of a home in Carnegie is just under a million dollars at $935,000.

In addition, there are many residents in my electorate between the ages of 20 and 44—higher than the national average. This means that housing affordability remains a real concern for many homebuyers in my electorate. Higgins is a fantastic place to live and raise a family and, not surprisingly, when those children grow up they also wish to live in Higgins, close to their friends and family. I believe that there are things that we can examine, in this place, that can make it easier for people to have confidence in the current marketplace for residential property and to ensure that there is no distortion of the market for residential property.
Finally, it is indeed a great honour to be the member for Higgins and to represent the people of Higgins. I would like to thank all of those people who supported my campaign—in particular all of the volunteers who gave freely of their time. Ours is not a party that is of the union movement; it is a grassroots organisation and people need to give of their time in order for a campaign to be run. I would like to place on record my thanks to all those volunteers, over 800 of them, who helped out with the Higgins campaign, along with the wonderful Liberal Party members in my electorate led by Mark Stretton. I would also like to thank my staff, who every day do a tremendous job for me; my family, who support me no matter what; and especially my husband, Jon, who is on this wonderful journey with me. I look forward to being able to continue my engagement with the constituents of Higgins representing their issues. I have had, over the last four years, more than 200 mobile office meetings and more than 70 community forums. I pledge that in this term of parliament I will continue that very high engagement.

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (16:32): It is a pleasure to participate in the address-in-reply debate. I congratulate so many of the members on their addresses, particularly all of the new members who have experienced the privilege, first, of being elected to this place and then, usually in front of their family, friends and new colleagues, giving their first speech. It is a wonderful opportunity for all the new members on both sides of the House.

This address-in-reply is an opportunity for all members to reply to the new government’s agenda, as was outlined in Her Excellency's speech in the other place. Usually members of the opposition, the government or the crossbench confront a detailed plan, from the new or re-elected government, of what it plans to do over the course of the ensuing three years to build the nation: to build the nation's prosperity, to build opportunity for its citizens, and to build social and physical infrastructure and the like.

The challenge we have in giving our addresses-in-reply is that the government has outlined precious little by way of a new plan. The limits of the plan outlined by this new government are really defined by what the new government intends to dismantle or to cut, rather than what it intends to build. In policy areas that are particularly close to my heart, the government has outlined very little by way of new plans. I want to address a few of those plans, contrast them with what we were able to achieve over the last few years in government and pose some questions about what this government might intend to do by way of dismantling that.

The first area I would like to address is the area of mental health. This is an area of very longstanding neglect, frankly, by governments of all political persuasions, at state and Commonwealth levels, over many years. All of us supported a process of deinstitutionalisation that would see people living with mental illness who, for many years, had been confined to hospitals for their entire lives often brought out into the community—taken out of the institutions and allowed to live their lives in the community in different Australian cities and regional areas. That was a fantastic policy.

The difficulty was that the quid pro quo, the follow-up from that policy, was supposed to be greater investment in community based mental health services so that those Australians would be able to receive good levels of support, find employment and stable housing, ensure they had strong peer and family relationships and take up all of the opportunities that Australian citizens have in front of them. As I said, governments of all political persuasions—
particularly at state level, given that states have had responsibility for this policy area generally—
failed in delivering that quid pro quo. This led, firstly and most importantly, to very
significant disability and profound disadvantage for hundreds of thousands of our fellow
citizens and their families. It also eventually led to a very significant level of community
unease about the degree to which we were letting down those fellow citizens.

This unease really found its shape in Patrick McGorry being made the Australian of the
Year in 2010. That year, with a whole range of other supports, Professor McGorry was able to
shine a spotlight onto those issues associated with mental health at a national level that they
simply had not had shone on them before. It did not happen overnight. A whole range of great
organisations and individuals had done extraordinary work in previous years—beyondblue,
along with many individuals, had done fantastic work. But Professor McGorry was able, in an
election year, to bring a spotlight to these community failures for which we all bore
responsibility.

For the first time in Australian political history the two alternative Prime Ministers, the
current Prime Minister and former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, actually talked about mental
health in a federal political campaign. It was a wonderful thing. I commend the Liberal Party
for bringing a very substantial mental health policy to that 2010 campaign. Ultimately, when
we formed government, I was made the first ever mental health minister at a national level. I
then undertook a range of direct consultations all around the country—in regional areas and in
capital cities—with consumers, people living with mental illness, their family members and
their carers about what it was they wanted from a mental health reform package.

In 2011 we were able to deliver the largest-ever mental health reform package in
Commonwealth history. It covered a whole range of different age cohorts, a whole range of
different needs—many of them medical and many of them non-medical—many of them
related to housing and employment and other social supports. We brought in a whole range of
reforms, building on previous years, to deliver youth-specific mental health services, through
the headspace model in particular, that had been started under the previous Howard
government. We built upon that over the past few years. There were also services to deal with
the first episodes of psychosis, which are often experienced by young people in their late
teens or their early twenties—a model particularly pioneered by Professor McGorry.

We were able to bring into place new services to support families with very young children
experiencing mental health difficulties. It is not often understood that fully 25 per cent of all
mental health disorders emerge before the age of 12, often even before the age of five. Early
intervention to support those kids, and particularly to support their families, is critically
important if those kids are to be able to get back on the rails and embrace all of the
opportunities that Australia has to offer—schooling, post-school education and training, and
then adult lives. So again those were very wonderful reforms we were able to bring into place.

We were also able to respond to the requests that carers and consumers gave to me, as I
was travelling around the country, for much better integration between the different types of
services that people living with severe and persistent mental illness need. Often they are not
just medical services; they relate to their need to find stable housing, to find avenues into
employment and to be able to build good peer and family relationships. Those sorts of living
skills, as well, were all brought together into a program known as Partners in Recovery.
I hope that this new government will continue with a range of those reforms, as we did with the range of reforms that came under the Howard government—and I will talk soon about headspace—but we have heard very little from the Liberal Party since their 2010 election policy. I hope that we will hear more into the future.

Another area on which the new government has said precious little is the area of aged care. I know from talking to members across the chamber, whether it is in this chamber or outside, everyone understands how critical a policy area aged care is; both because of the growing demand that we are going to see in the system in the future as the population ages, but also because there are emerging differences in the preferences that older Australians have for their aged-care services. There are some new needs that are emerging, and I talk particularly about the growing prevalence of dementia.

We inherited, when we came to government in 2007, a position that had not changed much in the 11 years of the Howard government, not for want of trying. Prime Minister Howard had tried on two occasions to get substantial reform of the aged-care system through—in 1997 and in 2004—and he was not successful. So we inherited a system that was largely put in place, firstly, by the Hawke government in the mid-1980s, and then reformed by the Keating government in the early 1990s to bring in some Commonwealth funded home-care arrangements.

We had put in place a Productivity Commission inquiry that took place at the same time they were inquiring into a national disability insurance scheme, and we received a report from the Productivity Commission at about the same time they published the NDIS report as well. Both reports are excellent and pay great tribute to the social policy expertise of the Productivity Commission.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that the aged-care sector had become much better organised, in terms of dealing with its own internal differences and then presenting a united front to parliamentarians and the community about what they wanted from aged-care reform. A lot of the difficulty that Prime Minister Howard got into in 1997 and 2004 reflected the fact that the aged-care sector itself was not united about what it wanted from reform. I think people in the parliament and people in the community were entitled to say: 'Well, if the aged-care sector cannot say what they want, why should we take a leap of faith into that unknown?' They learnt from that; they formed the National Aged Care Alliance, and they were able to work through their differences and present two important documents—first the NACA blueprint and then the NACA vision—about what they wanted from aged-care reform. NACA covered aged-care providers; the big church and charitable providers; private sector for-profit providers; the big consumer groups, like the Council on the Ageing, Alzheimer's Australia, Legacy and many others; aged-care staff; clinicians; and pretty much anyone with an interest in the aged-care sector. These were very good reports and they certainly assisted me and other government members in responding to the Productivity Commission report.

After we received the report, I talked to literally thousands of older Australians in dozens of forums around the country, in capital cities and in many regional communities as well, to hear from them what they wanted from aged-care reform. Many of these were general forums where people came along. A number of them were specific forums for people living with dementia and their families, and they were incredibly powerful opportunities for me to hear from them about the failures of so many different elements of our health system—the hospital...
sector, the primary care sector and the aged-care sector—to respond to and support the particular needs of the tens and tens of thousands of Australians who are living with dementia now.

We came up with a comprehensive package to respond to the Productivity Commission report in the 2012 budget. It really does transform the nature of our aged-care system. It starts to bring to the centre of the system the need for people to live in their own home for as long as possible. If there was a single message I heard from older Australians during that period, it was that they did not want the aged-care system to be about nursing homes—although they wanted to know there was a good nursing home system there to fall back on if they needed it—they wanted aged care to be focused on supporting them to stay in their own home for as long as possible and, if at all possible, for the remainder of their lives. Our package significantly lifts the number of home-care packages and home support packages that older Australians are able to receive in their own home.

We also brought a new level of transparency and robustness to the way in which the residential care or nursing home sector works, particularly around the question of what accommodation charges some older Australians will have to pay to get into those nursing homes. We heard terrible stories about people being charged arbitrary figures that would run into the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars as bonds to enter aged-care facilities, with no requirement on the provider at all to justify why a figure of $500,000 or $600,000 or $700,000 or even $800,000 needed to be paid to gain entry to an aged-care facility. We have brought much more robustness. I understand the government will keep in place the Aged Care Financing Authority, which puts providers to proof about what they are charging older Australians and why. I think that will very significantly lift the confidence that older Australians and their families have in the residential care sector.

I am particularly proud of the elements of the reform package that respond to the needs of people living with dementia. I want to pay particular tribute to Alzheimer's Australia. This is an organisation that has been providing wonderful support for many, many years to Australians affected by this condition. It lifted its game incredibly with a public campaign that caught people's attention in this parliament and across the Australian community—across the cities, across the regions. It really captured the imagination of so many Australians about the need to come to grips with what I think will be one of the two major epidemics for Australia in the 21st century, and that is dementia.

The numbers of people living with dementia, if we do not find a cure for this condition, will double every 20 years, reaching a million people by 2050 or so. As I said earlier in my address, neither our health system nor our aged-care system is well equipped to deal with those particular needs. To be frank, and without apology, the elements of the reform package that we adopted in this area largely come from the Fight Dementia Campaign that Alzheimer's Australia developed and talked about to parliamentarians across both sides of this chamber in the months leading up to the budget in 2012. I hope that the new government will support those elements of the aged-care reform package. I commend the new government for taking to the election campaign we just had a policy to provide additional funding for research into Alzheimer's. I think that is an important step in building on our reforms in this area, but again I cannot stress enough how important it is to shine a spotlight on the need of the health and aged-care sectors to respond to the needs of people living with Alzheimer's.
One element of the reform package where I think the government and the opposition part company is around issues associated with our workforce. The one change that we have seen to the reform package from the new government is to take $1.1 billion out of a program that was intended to start to lift the wages of aged-care workers. This is a very significant challenge, party politics aside. Aged-care providers are already having difficulty attracting and then retaining quality aged-care staff because of the low wages that they are paid. We currently have 350,000 workers in the aged-care sector. We are going to need about a million aged-care workers by 2050, to the point where one in 20 workers in Australia will be an aged-care worker. If we do not lift their wages, we simply will not get there. The position that we outlined in the reform package around wages reflected exactly the position that the aged-care sector had entirely signed up to in the National Aged Care Alliance blueprint. I am very disappointed that the new government has decided to turn its back on that element and particularly disappointed because I have not heard anything from the new government about what it intends to do to improve recruitment and retention of staff performing some of the most important work that our community has.

In the few minutes I have left, I want to say a few things about the wonderful community that I have the privilege of representing. This is my third election as the member for Port Adelaide. My two predecessors, Mick Young and Rod Sawford, both achieved seven elections, so I am a very long way short of those two very significant members for Port Adelaide. But it really is a privilege to serve the community. The community is made up of a number of different bits: the traditional port of Adelaide; the Lefevre Peninsula; the north-western suburbs, where I live; and then, beyond the salt pans, the northern suburbs, which have wonderful traditions and a wonderful culture. This is a community that is deeply tribal and has very high expectations—I know, from going to street corner meetings, shopping centres and footy clubs—of its members of parliament, whether they be members of this parliament or of the state parliament. I am acutely conscious every day I go to work of the high expectations that my community has of me.

They have achieved very big benefits from the last six years of the Rudd and Gillard governments. I have seen, from the time I started going to high schools in the area—because my kids are still at primary school I had not been to a high school since I was at high school—the capital upgrades that have been achieved over the last few years. When I started going to the high schools in my community, some of them only had one computer for every eight children. The changes that they have seen in the last several years have been extraordinary. There are trades training centres and community infrastructure. We saw part of the Rudd government's response to the global financial crisis bring new sporting and community facilities that are being used every day and every week. We have seen Water Proofing the West, which is a wonderful stormwater-recycling project. I know that those opposite do not see a role for the Commonwealth in urban stormwater, but this has been a wonderful project to do urban stormwater-recycling in that area.

In closing, I want to thank the vast number of supporters that we all need if we are going to get to this position and be a member of the federal parliament. Party members and party supporters again came out in force through the whole of the last three years, which were often very difficult years for members of the Labor Party, I can tell you. They came out time and time again, including in the election campaign, and supported me. For that, I am extremely
grateful. They will now be working hard again, in the state election campaign over the next couple of weeks. There were so many other volunteers—not party members and not even people who would consider themselves ongoing party supporters—who also were willing to come out and give me support: well-wishers who would just say a good word to you in the shopping centre or at the footy club and make you lift your step when you might be feeling a bit exhausted. I had extraordinary officers, headed by Karen Grogan in the ministerial office and Julie Duncan in the electoral office, for whom again I am incredibly grateful. But without family and without friends—particularly without my wife, Suzanne, and my children, Ellie and Isaac—to come home to every now and then, when we have finally left and I can get back to Adelaide, this would not be worth doing. It is a wonderful privilege to be a member of this parliament. It is a wonderful privilege to represent Port Adelaide, and I am looking forward to the next three years.

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (16:52): 'The Murrumbidgee's winding waters light the lives of Wagga's sturdy breed. Like hope eternal its waters bright flow on as our undying creed.' There is a message for all of us in the opening lines to the school song of St Michael's Regional High School at Wagga Wagga. The school served the Catholic and wider community well from 1873 until its closure in 2003. It was a boys school, and it was my school, from 1977 to 1980. I loved almost every minute of it. Whether or not you attended what was a Christian Brothers institution, there is some resonance of St Michael's song to those who live along the mighty Murrumbidgee or who rely on its life-giving water. Riverina people are a sturdy breed. They have had to be in the past; they will certainly have to be in the future.

Murrumbidgee, from the language of the original custodians of the land, the Wiradjuri people, means 'big water'. The intrepid explorer, Captain Charles Sturt, after whom the Wagga Wagga campus of that remarkable university takes its name, went on his epic journey of discovery along the Murrumbidgee in 1830. Sturt and his party were often forced to carry their whaleboat on their shoulders rather than the easier and preferable option of rowing it down the river. That is because the river back then sometimes did not run—and sometimes it flooded. The greenies and the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists will probably dispute that, but it is true.

Whilst it is important that South Australia's water supply is secure and that the river environment is given due consideration, it is also imperative that the farmers and irrigation communities of the Riverina be allowed to continue what they have done on behalf of the nation for more than 100 years. The original Murray-Darling Basin Plan was stopped in its tracks in late 2010 by the loud and united voice of those marvellous people of Griffith and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. They rallied in their thousands. They burnt copies of the daft draft. They forced the government to change course. People power won the day. Common sense won over rank stupidity.

On Thursday last week the New South Wales government, having held out for a better and fairer deal, finally signed the agreement with the Commonwealth. The plan is not perfect. No agreement on water would ever receive wholehearted endorsement by all stakeholders. Mark Twain is attributed as saying that whiskey is for drinking and water is for fighting over, and he was right of course.
I will always defend the rights of family farmers to have access to water to grow the fibre and food to clothe and feed our people and many others besides. When I came to this place in my first term I said my motto is that I shall not be silent when I ought to speak. Throughout my first term in this place that principle was tested many times, but I am proud to say that I stuck with it. I am proud of what I was able to achieve for the Wagga Wagga and Griffith base hospitals.

Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, which was first opened in 1963, has long been waiting for an upgrade. Successive New South Wales governments promised funding would come, but it was not until the New South Wales coalition came to government that the New South Wales state government started taking the project seriously. I am proud that the 2011-12 federal budget found $55.1 million for Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and the project is not only well underway but ahead of schedule.

Had it not been for a chance run-in at the Brisbane airport with Nicola Roxon, the former health minister, within weeks of the May 2011 budget, Wagga Wagga might well have missed out again. The minister was until that time mistakenly of the view that the project had been fully funded by the state government. Minister Roxon was willing to listen to my lobbying and found the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital the necessary funds. I am pleased to say that construction of the hospital is well underway. She also listened to my plea to give Ungarie flood assistance after Humbug Creek almost swept the village away on 4 March 2012.

I am also proud of the health funding boosts to the communities of Griffith and Hillston in the west and north-west of my Riverina electorate. The $11.3 million in funding in the 2012-13 budget for the Griffith community hospital was described by one of its chief proponents, John Casella, as 'good health, good for education and a real boost for our area', which has been hard hit in recent years. It was a delight of mine to inform the then Mayor of Griffith City Council, Mike Neville, of the project's success. He told me the news was 'just fantastic'. My good friend Adrian Piccoli, the member for Murrumbidgee in New South Wales and education minister, said it was 'the best political news he had ever heard'. This funding was complemented by the announcement that the multipurpose service at Hillston was also funded to the tune of $6 million.

The productive farming areas of Griffith and Hillston were both placed under considerable pressure as a result of uncertainty with future water availability at the time and the health announcements in those two areas were greeted with delight and surprise. As I have stressed in this place before, it is incumbent upon all of us never to forget the people who send us here and to stand up for them in this place always. For me, standing up for the people and being a voice for those who do not have one is why I ran for parliament in the first place and it is what drives me to come into this place again and again determined to represent the Riverina, a Federation seat, to the very best of my ability.

There is no denying that the 43rd Parliament was a roller-coaster ride for all in this place. It was the first minority government since that of John Curtin in 1941. It was a government that brought with it some of the worst debt, some of the biggest broken promises and a carbon tax that the Prime Minister promised would never be part of a government she led. Amongst this the Murray-Darling Basin Plan discussions were raging. Throughout the purpose-built irrigation areas in my electorate, which are rich with many cultures and have an abundance of produce upon which this nation relies, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan caused much angst. I
will never forget the day I went to Griffith to attend the largest public rally. It was Thursday, 15 December 2011. At the Yoogali Club on Mackay Avenue in Griffith there were 14,000 passionate people there to fight for their water rights and their future.

It was a bad plan and the irrigators, the growers, the producers and the small business people all knew it. They knew what a devastating impact a bad plan such as that would have had on the purpose-built irrigation communities throughout the basin. There with me was my good friend and Nationals colleague Senator Fiona Nash, who is now the Assistant Minister for Health, and the opposition leader and now Prime Minister. They were there to listen, to care and to stand up for what was right. The then water minister, Tony Burke, the member for Watson, was there too. While we will never agree on the Basin Plan or on water rights, I do acknowledge that it took guts for him to turn up and, in the mist of all that passion and angst, stand and tell the then government's story.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan was a threat to the people of my electorate and the basin. When I ran for parliament in 2010 I made it clear that I would be their voice in parliament, and I followed through on that, moving a motion to disallow the passage of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan through parliament. It was important to me and to the people of my electorate that I kept my word. Whatever the disallowance motion may have meant in this place—and my motion to disallow was defeated 95 to five—it meant a lot to the irrigators and producers of the Riverina to have a local member stand up for them, cross the floor and do what was right. Moving the disallowance motion has also meant that I as the local member can walk along Banna Avenue, Griffith's main street, and the main streets of many irrigation areas in my electorate and look farmers and people in the eye and tell them I did my best and I helped bring about a promise to cap buybacks at 1,500 gigalitres. The confirmation of this from my colleague Senator Simon Birmingham means that certainty has come to the irrigators of my electorate and they can plan their harvest with renewed confidence.

I am proud to be serving the government as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance, Senator Mathias Cormann. I am relishing the challenge of my portfolio responsibilities. I thank Rachel Thompson, Brett Chant, Julianne Hyland and Carl Fitzpatrick for their work in my office in this role.

In the context of everything that government does, it is not surprising that from time to time the design or administration of Commonwealth regulation results in inequitable, unintentional or anomalous outcomes. That is why we have discretionary compensation mechanisms—act of grace payments and the scope to waive debts owed to the Commonwealth—for which I have responsibility. It is my hope that with fewer and better-designed regulations and a risk based approach to their administration we will see better outcomes for citizens and less need to resort to discretionary measures such as act of grace payments.

The Productivity Commission noted last year that those regulators with the best relationship with small businesses were those that took a risk based approach to regulation. The Commonwealth has come a long way in improving its approach to risk management since Comcover was established in 1998, but there is still much more to be done. One of my priorities is to promote a more mature approach to risk management within the Commonwealth, an approach that encourages officials to place risk management at the heart
of everything that they do. This will apply as much to my own responsibilities in managing the administration of non-defence property portfolio as to anywhere else.

The reforms of the Hawke-Keating era were a response to a fundamental problem: the world had changed but government processes had not. Decades on, we face the same challenge. International trade and commerce, advances in technology, medical breakthroughs—all of these and more are changing the way Australians do business and the way we live. When faced with this challenge, the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government committed the fiscal equivalent of mortgaging the house to buy ice cream, as someone put it to me last week. The pleasure of short-term consumption has melted away, leaving us with a bucket load of debt. It is a big bucket, too.

Unlike those who preceded us, we are up to this challenge. The Commission of Audit is a crucial step in the process of considering the role of government. What is the government doing that people could reasonably be expected to do for themselves? Are the things we are spending money on worth the taxes needed to pay for them? Where is the government getting in the way of innovation and enterprise? What we need are reforms that will lift productivity and living standards into the future. Crucial to this process will be bipartisan support, the kind of bipartisan support that Hawke and Keating were able to rely on in pushing through their reform agenda. My invitation to those opposite is to work with us or risk being on the wrong side of history.

The incidence of mental illness and the high rate of suicide in regional Australia remains one of the least understood health crises facing our nation. Although the reasons why suicide is higher in rural and remote areas are not fully understood, we do know that suicide is roughly 30 per cent higher in regional and remote Australia. That is a huge challenge for our times. Indigenous Australians, young men under 24 years of age, men aged over 60 and farmers are particular population sub-groups considered to be at risk when it comes to suicide. Mental illness and suicide are felt especially severely in rural areas, where people are overrepresented in the statistics. There is nobody living in a country town today who has not been personally touched by suicide. How sad is that? It is the silent epidemic of our time. Minister Nash has done an outstanding job for rural health since she was appointed Assistant Minister for Health, and I commend her ongoing stewardship of this important portfolio.

As most would appreciate, life in the Australian bush can be harsh. It can mean hard work in often difficult environments. Farming and related industries can often be at the mercy of unpredictable weather. We are a land of flooding rains and long droughts. An entire year of production could be wiped out in the blink of an eye. External market forces and unfavourable currency can also put additional pressures on farming communities and families.

Even in the face of those adversities, it is difficult to reconcile higher rates of suicide in rural communities when these same communities consistently report higher levels of social cohesion than in major cities. People in rural areas are close-knit. They are friends; they are mates. People feel safer, there is more volunteerism and the social connections are greater in the bush. Wagga Wagga, my hometown, was recently judged the most family friendly city in Australia. These are the enduring strengths of our regions and these are also the very protective factors that can help fight the effects of depression and mental illness; yet the actual experience in the bush could not be more different.
Although the evidence from the millennium drought indicates that there was no increase in farmer suicides between 2001 and 2007 due to the drought, we know that there was a concerted effort by all governments to provide counselling and mental health services targeted towards various at-risk groups in drought prone areas during this difficult period. People from the bush are made of tough stuff, and when things start to become difficult they often try to tough it out, to not seek help, to fix their own problems. The fear of failure is a particularly strong motivator in the bush. It is this attitude, particularly among men, which makes it harder to identify when someone might be under more stress than normal, suffering from depression or perhaps even contemplating taking their own life. Despite widespread public awareness and education campaigns over many years, the stigma and shame associated with mental illness still exist to this day.

A lack of adequate services in rural and remote areas might account for some of the rural-specific suicide rate, and I know that all sides of this chamber have a commitment to providing services wherever they are needed. Indeed, I remain hopeful that this government will be able to deliver a headspace youth mental health centre in the Murrumbidgee, as I know many in my community would like to see. But dealing with mental illness is not just purely a health or psychological condition that requires medical help. While services do exist, we recognise that not every person suffering from mental illness will access them. Every community, therefore, has a responsibility to ensure that we are looking out for each other, that as resilient as we are no person can carry their burdens alone for too long. We do need to build resilience and to promote positivity.

The time has come for us as a community to shine a light on this unyielding tragedy that unfolds every week in households, farms and towns across our nation. We need to be able to discuss suicide and depression without the shame and stigma. Families need to be frank and honest with each other about the welfare of a family member, if they are concerned. Friends need to be extra vigilant about what their peers are going through. My message to rural communities is that there is no shame in raising mental health issues, there is no shame in being concerned for one another and there is certainly no shame in seeking help if and when we need it. Every person lost to suicide is an unnecessary and avoidable loss, and everyone has a role to play when it comes to suicide prevention.

I am humbled to have been returned as the federal member for Riverina and to have the opportunity to continue working for the people of the Riverina in the new Abbott-Truss government. I am thankful to the people of the Riverina for placing their faith and trust in me to be their voice again. My 2013 campaign director, Wes Fang of Wagga Wagga, is a loyal friend and confidant. Wes—the father of two young boys and he is expecting the arrival of another child in the coming weeks—worked tirelessly, day and night, for the campaign. There was nothing which was too much work for Wes. He spent hours stuffing envelopes, putting up corflutes, coordinating with the campaign committee and organising campaign events, all with a young family at home. Wes did all this in the midst of starting a small business, caring for his terminally ill father, Tom—may he rest in peace—and building a new home. I am very grateful to Wes for his hard work and dedication. I would like to publicly thank Wes and wish him and his wife, Nat Snyman, and their boys, Caspar and Atticus, all the best for the new arrival on the way.
My campaign committee was full of hardworking local volunteers—decent, compassionate and determined country people who did what was needed to get the job done. For many on my campaign committee elections are a familiar get-together of friends doing what the campaign needs, often late at night, packing booth boxes and distributing corflutes around the 61,435 square kilometres of the Riverina electorate. They did their job, because on election day we won every one of the more than 100 polling booths in the Riverina. Despite the cold and late nights, these volunteers got stuck in and did the job—as country people always do.

I thank Richard and Gretchen Sleeman of San Isidore whose constant help and support saw every booth across an electorate the size of Tasmania manned, with corflutes distributed, minutes taken at meetings and campaign coordination assured. There was no stopping Gretchen Sleeman—she is such a spirited community-minded person who worked day and night to make sure The Nationals had someone at every booth. Richard, amongst his commitments with many other organisations, made sure corflutes were ready, booth boxes were packed and people were informed. I thank them both immensely.

My indefatigable campaign committee had many people from many communities who would meet weekly to work through what the campaign needed. In addition to the people mentioned, there were the Hon. Rick Bull of Holbrook, Anna and John Dennis of Collingullie, Councillor Pam Halliburton and Margaret Hill of Junee, Barney Hyams of Batlow, Dominic Hopkinson, my wife Catherine, Zac Lederhose, Joanne McLennan, Barbara Parnell, Ange Smit, Robert and Lesley Vennell, and Anabel Williams—all of Wagga Wagga. They are all hard workers, they are all friends and I thank them very much.

I wish to also thank my wonderful predecessor Kay Hull for her ongoing and unwavering support, Ben Franklin for all that he has done and continues to do on behalf of the NSW Nationals, and Temora mayor Councillor Rick Firman for his counsel, his friendship and, at times, his humour.

I thank my staff in Wagga Wagga and Griffith who work hard every day to serve the people of the Riverina—not just those who vote Nationals but all the people of the Riverina. In Wagga Wagga Anabel Williams, Melissa Irvine, Anna Duggan, Dom Hopkinson, Kerrianne Malone, Ange Smit, Marney Johnstone, Helena Adamciewicz, Georgie Hutchinson and Jess Glynn have all worked for me at some point during my first term and I thank them for their efforts.

In Griffith, I thank Doris Bertollo, a stalwart of the Riverina electorate office who has worked in that role in Griffith for more than 25 years. After having worked for both Noel Hicks and Kay Hull before me, there is nothing Doris does not know about the Riverina or the immigration portfolio. Jess, Ange, Kerrianne and Anabel have all had a baby within the past 18 months or are due within the coming weeks—I am not quite sure what that says about my electorate office. I wish them and their families all the best with their new arrivals.

I am blessed with a loving and supportive family. My wife, Catherine, and I have spent 27 years together—she has put up with a lot—building a life for ourselves and our three lovely children. To see Georgina, Alexander and Nicholas grow into strong, intelligent, purposeful adults has been one of the great joys of our life together. So I am especially keen to ensure that government does what it can to help support families. If we have strong families we have stronger and more resilient communities. We should recognise the role of the family unit in
providing people with a sense of belonging and as the foundation for people within communities to be socially connected with each other.

In closing, I restate my full commitment to serving the people of the Riverina. It is a wonderful electorate that stretches from the eastern side of Mount Kosciuszko—as Simon Crean described it, the high point of Australian politics—right through to many kilometres past Roto, which is past Hillston, the last big community. I do not take my responsibilities lightly and I will always fight for the interests of the people of the Riverina. I am extremely pleased that I am part of the Abbott-Truss government—not only do we have to fix the budget issues but also we are setting about putting Australia onto a sound economic footing so that we can meet the challenges of the future. There will be many challenges—challenges with water, challenges with border security and challenges for the economy—but we are up to the task. The Australian people gave us the mandate to carry out our reform agenda and we will do that with purpose, dedication and maturity.

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (17:12): I begin my contribution to this address-in-reply debate by thanking the very good people of Adelaide for returning me to this place once more, and I put on the record my gratitude for their support and for the faith they have placed in me. Of course that is something that none of us should take lightly, and we know that it is our job to work each and every day to make sure we repay their faith in us. Whilst this address-in-reply debate is an opportunity for the government to outline what they seek to achieve over the course of this parliament, it is also an opportunity for each and every one of us to outline our priorities and the key issues we will be seeking to pursue. My absolute No. 1 priority is to stand up strongly for the people of Adelaide. For almost 10 years now I have come to this place and tried to make sure that I represent honestly and forcefully their views and their opinions, and I look forward to continuing to do that over the course of the next three years.

Before talking about some of the issues and some of the views that the people of Adelaide have asked that I bring forward to this place, I would like to thank a few people for assisting me to be here. Of course there is the Adelaide community. I have now run in four federal election campaigns, and never before have I seen the kind of support from local community members that we saw during the course of the last campaign. It was remarkable to have people who had not come through the ranks of the Labor Party or any political party, but who were working out in the community, ringing the office and saying they wanted to help. We had people dropping off supplies to feed our volunteers. One remarkable community member, having heard me on radio, knew that I was unwell and the next day they brought a get-well pack, which included honey and lemon and all sorts of remedies, to get me through.

Ms Collins: Did it work?

Ms KATE ELLIS: I am here, Julie, so it must have been highly effective. To all of these people, I say thank you. I would also like to thank my amazing staff, who worked day and night throughout the campaign, as they do throughout the term to ensure that we can carry on in this role. One of the consequences that is sadly inevitable in moving from government to opposition is that you do downsize those staff considerably, but we have a saying. ‘Once a member of team Ellis, always member of team Ellis.’ I know that they will always be there and I will always show my gratitude for having the absolute best staff members, best
campaign committee members and best support that anyone could ask for. To all of them, I say thank you.

Now the job is to make sure that we stand up strongly for the people of Adelaide. Sadly, there is already evidence that there is going to be much to stand up against. I am really proud that we have managed to deliver record levels of investment and results to the Adelaide community over the last few years, but we have seen in the early stages of this Abbott government that they are a North Shore Sydney government who have never shown any interest whatsoever in South Australia or, particularly, in fighting for South Australian jobs. Already, just months in, we have seen the Holden closure and the thousands of local families who will be affected by that.

I will also place on the record today my thoughts for the Qantas workers who were delivered the incredibly bad news of 5,000 job cuts just last week. I know that many of those Qantas workers are residents of the seat of Adelaide. I have visited and spoken to them about their concerns about a lack of job security. I would like to say that I will absolutely use this parliament to ensure that we pursue a plan to get them back to work and to turn around the statistics which we have now seen showing that, since this government was elected, there has been one job lost every three minutes. That is unacceptable to my local community and it is unacceptable for our nation.

We have seen an emphasis by the Prime Minister, by the Treasurer and by others on Sydney, particularly North Shore Sydney. It is my job to make sure that South Australia is not overlooked. It is my job to make sure that the residents of Adelaide are not overlooked, and there are many key issues which are at stake. At the last election we already saw a number of issues to which we pledged funds for the Adelaide community which have so far not been matched and honoured by the government. I talk about things like the Women & Children's Hospital Foundation's funding for a feasibility study to look into increasing their research capacity, something that I would think that every South Australian should stand up and fight for and support.

Also in the local community there are things like new lighting and upgrades to the club facilities at the Broadview Football Club. This is a club that has gone through hard times. This is a club that has worked through those hard times and has massively expanded to see that the Broadview Football Club is now offering sport, entertainment and a community hub, and it has huge numbers of junior players coming through. We want to make sure that we are not turning away people who are engaging in a healthy pursuit on the weekends because the facilities are not there to support them. It is shameful that the incoming health and sports minister has said that they will not be matching just $120,000 for the Broadview Football Club.

One of the areas of my electorate for which I have a particular soft spot is Kilburn. The good people of Kilburn have worked long and hard and have too often have been overlooked by governments of all persuasions at all levels. These are people who have worked hard, have largely have come through public housing, have too much pollution in their area and have a lack of community facilities. Yet, when Kilburn Primary School was closed down several years ago, I launched a campaign to ensure that that space would be used for the local community, that there would not be more heavy industry moving into the area and that we would have a place where the community could come together. I was so incredibly proud to
be able to announce $1 million in funding to build a sporting complex at the Kilburn Primary School site. It would be the new home of the West Adelaide Football Club, but, perhaps more importantly, it would also be open to community use.

Kilburn is one of the areas in the community that I represent where the demographics have changed hugely. They have an ever-growing Afghan community, who are pretty handy on the soccer field, I have to say, but are looking for a place to train and to play. There are also members of the Sudanese community moving into the area who are very keen to ensure that there is some place provided for sporting facilities and a facility where people can meet one another and come together as a community regardless of their background. Sadly, the Abbott government have failed to match this commitment too.

The situation of the Victoria Park grandstand is perhaps the most shocking. An area has been redeveloped around Victoria Park so that it can host a number of different community and sporting events. We pledged $62,000 for disability access at that grandstand. That is something that I would expect every member of this parliament would support, but, shockingly, $62,000 has now been ripped off of them so that this disability access will not be able to go ahead and so that these community events will not be able to be attended by all members of our community. It is on issues like these and so many more that it will be my role to stand up for the Adelaide community.

One issue that I particularly want to touch on, noting the minister who is at the table today—Minister Briggs—is the issue of the South Road upgrade. The assistant minister may know that this is a particular pet project. It is a big project. It is an incredibly important project for both Adelaide and South Australia. It is a project that was estimated to cost $896 million to upgrade South Road between Torrens Road and the River Torrens. It is a project which the former Labor federal government struck a deal with the state government on a fifty-fifty funding commitment so that this project could commence. This project did actually commence. There have been properties that have already been acquired. There was work that had already commenced. There is a site office that is up and running that had conducted community consultations. There was actually work happening on the ground to ensure that this became a very long overdue reality.

Even this year alone, it is an issue that I can say I have heard about at countless street corner meetings—that the residents are absolutely furious. Not only has this project now been brought to a stop but the residents in the local area actually received a flyer in their letterboxes during the election campaign saying, 'If you vote for the Liberal Party we will upgrade South Road to the western suburbs.' This was to the very residents who had fought for the Torrens to Torrens upgrade—not just for years but for decades—only to then learn that indeed the progress on that project would be stopped.

But I am hoping that there will soon be good news on this front. This is where I look towards the assistant minister. I was delighted on the weekend when I read The Weekend Australian—which does not always bring me delight, I should say! But I was particularly delighted to read this article, 'Tony Abbott eyes $5 billion for new road funding'. I note that the assistant minister said:

Infrastructure is already a major commitment of the federal government and I think you’ll see an even greater commitment, because there is a great need to lift our national productivity.

Now, I do not always agree with the assistant minister sitting at the table—
Mr Briggs: You never do!

Ms KATE ELLIS: But on this particular occasion, I say to him that if he wants to prove the point that this is not a government that is only focused on North Shore Sydney, that this is not a government that has absolutely and totally overlooked South Australia, then there is no reason why this funding, which is apparently on its way, will not ensure that the Torrens to Torrens road upgrade of South Road gets back underway and that we see this project delivered for the community that I am so proud to represent.

We know that the economic case stacks up. We know that there is far more policy rationale for doing this than the Darlington upgrade, which politics has persuaded the government to prioritise instead. We know that it is long overdue and we know that it will not just benefit South Road; it will not just benefit those who are using it as a corridor—the trucks and the like—but it will actually benefit the whole area. All the studies have shown that it will decrease massively the amount of traffic which is utilising Churchill Road and a number of other areas.

So whether it is on fighting for the South Road upgrade or whether it is on fighting for the funding which the Abbott government has already stripped away from the Adelaide community, I am delighted to be here to fight for those residents and to make sure that we continue to see real results.

Of course, I have been given a task on top of just looking after the people of Adelaide, and that is to serve as Labor's shadow minister for education and early childhood. They are two areas that I am deeply passionate about; in fact, the area of education was the very area which inspired me to look towards politics, knowing that education has the power to transform individual lives more than any other area of investment. It is a job that I take on with quite a sense of responsibility because I am incredibly proud of the huge amount of progress that we made in the education area under the Rudd and Gillard governments.

This was an area that was transformed. We saw new policies come into place: a national curriculum, which had been talked about for so long, finally became a reality; we could shine a light on school performance through national testing and making results available through accountability at a school level; and, importantly, we undertook the biggest review of the Australian school education system in over 40 years, under the panel led by David Gonski. Throughout that process, we had those opposite saying: 'There is no problem. There is no equity issue in Australian schools. There is nothing to see here; the funding model is not broken.' But, of course, the Australian public knew better. The Australian public sees the overwhelming evidence that there is far too big a gap between those schools which are high performing and those schools which are struggling, that this is a gap which is increasing.

There is far too big a gap between the performance of a student who is enrolled at a metropolitan school and one who happens to live in country Australia. There are far too many huge equity gaps in the Australian education system, and the Australian public know that, because whether you are a student, a teacher or a parent you see each and every day what is happening in our school system.

We saw on almost the eve of the election those opposite finally recognising that this was a critically important issue to the Australian public. So what did they do? They had a total reversal of policy, where they came out and declared that they had seen the light—they, too,
agreed that we needed to see these school reforms. And in what has already been shown to be absolutely the biggest fraud committed on the Australian public, we now see that that was just not the case. They stood up—and not just on one occasion but time and time again—like the now Prime Minister, talking about how he was on a 'unity ticket' with Labor when it came to school funding, and the now education minister, saying:

You can vote Liberal or Labor and you'll get exactly the same amount of funding for your school.

He said, 'Well, we've said that we will adopt the new school funding model from 1 January next year for the next four years. So, it yes, we've accepted that there is a new school funding model.' The Prime Minister also said:

So, we will honour the agreements that Labor has entered into. We will match the offers that Labor has made.

The minister also said, 'Funding will be the same under the coalition as under the Labor Party.'

What is truly shameful from this government is that they stood at polling booths around Australia saying this. They had posters, 'Your school will receive the same amount of funding under Liberal or Labor.' But we already know that that is absolutely not true, and it was a sham that they tried to pull on the Australian public. It is our job on this side of the House to say: 'We will not give up on these reforms. We know that our school system is too important to let those opposite just throw away all of the progress that has been made.' But what we will also do is to point out, each and every day, to those who still come in here crying about broken promises on carbon tax, that every pamphlet they sent out to their communities and every sign in a polling booth about school funding has been shown to be utterly false in the most disgusting attempt to trick the Australian public that I think we have probably ever seen.

We now know that there is a huge difference in the amount of funding that schools will get under this government. What we were talking about under Labor's Gonski reforms would see $14.65 billion in additional funding flowing to Australian schools. Under the model put forward by those opposite, that figure is just $2.8 billion. Worse than that, those opposite, who claimed that there would be 'no difference in the amount of funding that your school would get', have then come in and said, 'Actually, we're going to throw away all of the conditions that were placed on state governments.' Even though our reforms had finally changed a system that saw too many state governments cutting funding to schools, not keeping up with indexation and not making co-contributions for additional federal funds, those opposite have come in and said, 'Yes, we'll send out a no-strings-attached blank cheque to the state governments but we will do absolutely nothing to stop them from cutting from their school education budgets the same amount in additional money that they're getting—or, indeed, more.' The government have said that they will do nothing to require state governments to put in co-contributions for the dollars in federal funding that they have received, which shows that there is absolutely no way that any member of the government, any of those opposite, can repeat the promises that they made at polling booths on election day. We have seen it from the Prime Minister. We have seen it from the education minister. They can no longer say, 'Your school will receive the same amount of funding under us,' as the school would have under the Labor Party, because they know that it was a sham the entire time.
We also heard that there would be no cuts to education, yet we have seen $1 billion stripped from the trade-training centres program—because, at a time when we are losing jobs, at a time when we are seeing youth unemployment, those opposite think it is a smart idea to cut the very programs that were put in place to skill young Australians. And now there are alarm bells ringing about the Youth Connections program, a program that was put in place to help young Australians who are at risk of being disengaged and falling out of our education or employment systems to stay engaged. There are huge question marks about whether those opposite are just going to cut another program.

I say to all members of this House: it is our responsibility to fight against the youth unemployment figures that we are seeing in this nation. Now, I do not claim that there is one silver bullet that is going to turn that around—and those opposite are being dishonest if they claim that there is—but I do say that you do not keep a single young person in employment by cutting the programs that are already in place to try and support them. There is absolutely no rationale for that. On this cut and on a range of other cuts, I am proud to be here in the parliament representing the very good voters of Adelaide, and I pledge to work my hardest each and every day to do just that.

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (17:32): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate and it is the privilege of all of us who are elected to this place that we get the opportunity to do so. I should say, as the member for Adelaide leaves the chamber, that she should be very happy with the new government's decision in respect of South Road, because we will, as the Prime Minister said in October last year, deliver a north-south corridor in South Australia and help build the productive capacity of our state within a decade. We have said time and time again that we will do both the Darlington and the Torrens-to-Torrens projects because they are both important projects.

As I said at the start, it is an absolute honour and privilege to be in this place. This is the third occasion I have had the opportunity to make this address. Actually, technically, it is the second, because the first time, as I was the child of a by-election, my maiden speech was on a bill. But it is a real privilege to be here again, and I thank the people of Mayo for delivering a very solid result for me and the Liberal Party on 7 September. I can report to the House that we had a swing to the Liberal Party of 5.22 per cent in my electorate, which puts me into the semi-marginal area of 62½ per cent, so I am very pleased with that. I did not quite get to Alexander Downer's best result in Mayo, but we will keep working away at that.

We only lost at one booth, which was at Bridgewater, by seven votes, and we know that Tim Burvill, who was in charge of that booth, was responsible for that! And I wish him a happy birthday for tomorrow. We had some great results in the new areas of McLaren Vale, McLaren Flat and Willunga, which we had inherited from—and she will not thank me for saying this—the member for Kingston, who had lost those areas in a redistribution. The member for Kingston is actually a very hardworking member and much underrated in this place, in my view, and I think that was one of the reasons that we had an 11.4 per cent swing in McLaren Vale, a 15.3 per cent swing in McLaren Flat and an 11.7 per cent swing in Willunga.

So it was a great result and it was a result based on, I think, a lot of hard work on issues that were important to my electorate. The first and overwhelming issue was that people wanted to change the government, and they did. That was terrific because that gave us the
opportunity to implement our plan for Australia, to ensure that we are stronger and more prosperous than we would have been down the path the Labor Party was taking us.

But locally there were some important issues as well which I would like to deal with. Firstly, the most contentious issue in my electorate in the last three years was certainly the former government's decision to break an election promise following the 2010 election and put a detention facility at Inverbrackie without consulting the community first, breaking a commitment not to have more onshore detention facilities. That decision caused a lot of community resentment, a lot of community anger, around Woodside and Oakbank, and those parts of the Adelaide Hills, particularly the fact that they had never been consulted. They had never been asked by the former government whether this was something they would support. It was a commitment of ours at the election, a commitment that will be fulfilled in the very near future, that we will close that facility's operations because it is not an appropriate way to deal with the border security issue that the minister for immigration is so magnificently handling. So we look forward to that announcement. There have been some people, particularly some Adelaide Hills councillors who are certainly not of the Liberal persuasion, or even of the Labor persuasion, who constantly make claims that the centre retains community support and therefore should remain open.

The now minister for immigration and I put a very clear proposition to the electorate prior to the last election that we would close it if we won the election. The swing towards the Liberal Party in the booths most related to this centre, at Woodside and Oakbank—great Australians—was nine per cent in Woodside and nine per cent in Oakbank. Those members of the Adelaide Hills Council—who really should focus on delivering services to those of us who pay rates rather than focusing on federal politics and continuing to make these false claims—should look to what their voters actually said. There will be an opportunity in November when the council elections come up for those voters to send exactly the same message to some of those councillors.

An issue which I have fought for consistently since being pre-selected and since being elected to this place and which I will continually advocate for—and be proudly standing there when we have turned the first sod, as, ironically, the minister responsible—is the second interchange at Bald Hills Road off the South Eastern Freeway to cater for the growth in Mount Barker. Alexander Downer, when he was the member for Mayo, made a commitment in the 2007 election campaign that the federal government would contribute funding towards it. Mark Goldsworthy, the state member for Kavel, said the same in 2006 and 2010 and is saying the same in 2014. I made that commitment in the by-election in 2008 and 2010 and in 2013 we committed $16 million towards the project. I am happy to report to the House that, after being ignored for four years, the state Labor government, who opened up all the land around Mount Barker for development but failed to invest in the infrastructure, and Minister Koutsantonis, to his credit—and I do not think I have ever used those words in the same sentence before—have announced at the last minute that the Labor Party, if they are re-elected in a week and a half's time, which I truly hope does not happen, will fund the project.

So the people of Mount Barker and the people of Mayo know that, no matter who wins the state election, this project will be delivered. I will proudly be standing there later this year when we turn that first sod and we make sure that this project is delivered cheaply, efficiently and quickly, in line with our agenda to deliver more infrastructure to make Australia more
prosperous and more productive. This is a very important piece of infrastructure. It will help alleviate the concerns of residents about the increased growth in our region after the state Labor Party decided to open up our region for that growth without investing in the necessary infrastructure. This is a small step to ensuring that the increased number of people who are living in Mount Barker and its surrounds have access to the freeway in a safe and efficient way. At the moment there is one exit to the freeway from Adelaide Road and it has become a constant bottleneck as the community has grown. It is not safe. We are in a bushfire zone in the Adelaide Hills, and one exit from a major town is far from safe. Having a second exit and entrance will make the town more efficient and much move liveable for the residents of Mount Barker. It is a huge win.

While there has been some misreporting in the local papers about what was offered by the state government, it is a proud achievement that I am extraordinarily proud to be part of. We have committed to this project and we will see this project through. I very much look forward to this road being built. Hopefully, after the 2016 election, if I am returned—I do intend to nominate again—I will be able to stand here and say that it is now delivered, open and operating, unless something gets dramatically in the way of that. That is, I think, the No. 1 commitment that I have pursued.

The second commitment that I have pursued is the swimming pool on the south coast—the Fleurieu aquatic centre. It is an issue which has raised some controversy in recent times. I committed to this project when I first ran in the by-election and I committed again in 2010. In this election we took the correct position to ensure that we were not making commitments that we could not fund, and there was some question about the commitment. But, given the decision the Deputy Prime Minister and I made to allow the uncontracted rounds 2, 3 and 4 of the RDA funds to be spent, the Fleurieu aquatic centre will also go ahead, and we look forward in the very, very near future to signing that contract and getting that project underway for the people of the south coast.

Kangaroo Island, a beautiful part of my electorate, is an area that has great opportunity. It also has some challenges—as do many island communities across our country—because of the cost of freight and the cost of getting to the island. It is the jewel in the crown of South Australia and also of our country. About 60 per cent of overseas tourists who visit South Australia do so for the specific purpose of visiting KI. Our plan to abolish the carbon tax and to take regulatory pressure off business will help KI prosper, but we will also work very closely with the Mayor of Kangaroo Island, Jayne Bates—who does an outstanding job—to see what we can do in addition to ensure that the infrastructure needs are met on Kangaroo Island so that they can take advantage of all their strengths.

One issue that is bedevilling them—an issue that I have long had concerns about—is the blue gum forests. The MIS program from some time ago shows that when governments intervene to try to create industries and markets, it inevitably has consequences which are long and painful. There is no better example than the locked up productive land on Kangaroo Island, which could be farmed and used for much better purposes. It is destroying the community of Parndana, and we do need to try to find a solution to this. It is not easy but it needs to happen because Kangaroo Island is a jewel in our crown. Because of the fertile soils and the climate, food production on the island is a real strength, and the blue gums are inhibiting that. It came from bad policy. It is still bad and getting worse and we need to fix it.
Another very proud achievement—and something which was the issue of my by-election—is in respect of the Murray-Darling Basin. It is something that I—as someone who grew up on the river, in Mildura, and who has been involved in this issue for a very long time—passionately believe we needed to address. When I was in John Howard’s office, there was the groundbreaking plan to address the crisis in the Murray-Darling Basin. It has taken too long to get to this point where we can come to an agreement that we need to ensure that we can be as productive as possible in the basin but that we have a healthy basin. It is a terrific achievement of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, Simon Birmingham, to finally bring all the parties together—all the states—last week to sign up to the intergovernmental agreement and put those reforms in place, which will ensure that the deal that was done during the last term of parliament is locked away and achieved. I must mention Henry Jones, who is suffering from some health issues at the moment. He is a fisherman at Clayton and has fought day in and day out for years for this result. He will see the result and, I think, sit back with an element of pride. He deserves to have an element of pride, because he worked so hard, as did so many South Australians. It is a great achievement, particularly for Senator Birmingham, and I congratulate him on what he has done in that respect.

One of the commitments I made in the preselection for Mayo back in 2008 was that I would introduce a mobile electorate office to get around my electorate. It is a large electorate with diverse communities—the communities of Yankalilla, Victor Harbor and the Lower Lakes, out north to the Eden Valley and Springton, right through to the Adelaide Hills, where I live and continually show that I cannot ride a bike properly, and Kangaroo Island. So it is not easy for constituents to get to my office in Mount Barker, so I committed that we would get out and get around. During the last term I visited over 160 communities with my mobile electorate office, providing the opportunity for local residents to come and see me to raise issues. As I am sure all members of parliament in this place know, even if people do not always agree with you—or, indeed, often agree with you—they appreciate the opportunity to raise issues about Australia, politics, the economy, their jobs, their health care, their education and what have you. The fact that they get the chance to talk to their local member and that we live in a country where we can advertise that we will be somewhere and we have no fear of advertising that and we are not held up in our office constantly is another example, I think, of what a wonderful country we have. People are nearly always polite and respectful even if they are not always in full agreement, and we will do our best to convince those who do not necessarily agree with our perspective. I think getting around is an important thing that we do in my electorate, and I will continue to do it as much as I can—obviously with the additional responsibilities.

Following the election, it was a privilege, an honour and a shock to get a phone call from the Prime Minister inviting me to join the executive of the government. It is a humbling thing to be part of a ministry and to be one of the leaders of the government in driving our agenda through. I am constantly aware that this is a job which is not a right; it is an absolute privilege. We need to work at it every day to ensure that we are doing as well as we can to achieve the aims of the government. In infrastructure, as I said very early, we have bold plans. We have hard and difficult decisions to make to ensure we get our plans done, but we will get them done. We will invest in building our productive capacity. We will invest in ensuring that Australia can do better than we are doing today and that small business, medium business and
large business can compete as well as they possibly can. We do not believe in government by chequebook; we believe in government giving all Australians the opportunity to achieve their best. I think the Prime Minister has been outstanding in delivering this message since we came to government. I think that, as time goes on, he will be seen as one of our best prime ministers. He has all the capacity to deliver for Australia. Australians respect Tony Abbott because he is a good man with strong values and strong beliefs and he will pursue those for the good of our country. I fundamentally believe that.

In conclusion, I should acknowledge a few people. We would not be here without volunteers. They are the geniuses of us all, and without them we would not be elected. David Hall is first among equals in that respect. He goes out of his way. He lives in Victor Harbor and runs a manufacturing business which is doing better every day, and he travels and gives up his own time, often with very little thanks. He is a great man, and I thank him so much for what he has done. We would not have been able to do it without Marg Westmore, and my state counterpart Mark Goldsworthy could not do it without Marg Westmore either. She is a treasure extraordinaire. I acknowledge Richard Munro, who ran the campaign and was the genius behind the Briggs Bus, an innovation which will continue—that will be back in a campaign; don't you worry about that—and Bryan Reid for all he has done as well. There are many others whom I do not have the opportunity to thank in the time remaining. I do want to acknowledge Brian Dohse, though. He sadly passed away the day after I had my thank-you drinks in December. He was a great man and we will remember Brian for a long time to come.

I must thank my staff—because that is what they have written on my piece of paper! They were terrific. I had no changes in my staff in the whole of the last three years. I think it is a really important part of a political office to ensure that you have a consistent group, and I thank them very much for what they have done. They have a bigger task now with more people on board. Laura, Amy, David, Amelia and Rhiannon—and I am going to forget someone now—are terrific people and they have done a great amount of work for me. So with those remarks I again thank the people of Mayo for re-electing me to this place. Avril is the other one, and she will kill me for that! I seek leave to continue my remarks at another time.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

BILLS

Australian Research Council Amendment Bill 2013
Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment Bill 2013
Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Consumer Protection) Bill 2013
Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2013 Measures No. 1) Bill 2013
Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2013

Assent

Messages from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bills.
Cognate debate.
Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
to which the following amendment was moved:
That all the words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading the House notes that:
(1) the Government repeatedly stated before the election 'that if debt is the problem, more debt is not
the answer';
(2) the 2013-14 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook showed a $17 billion blow-out in the 2013-
14 budget deficit, which at the time represented a $167 million budget blow-out per day since the
Government took office;
(3) 60 per cent of the predicted budget blow-out in 2013-14 was due to the decisions of the
Government alone;
(4) the Government has sought to pave the way for deep cuts to the federal budget by deliberately
blowing out the budget and establishing its Commission of Audit; and
(5) these cuts would be another example of this Government saying one thing before the election,
and doing the complete opposite after it."

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (17:53): I rise today to speak on these appropriation bills noting
that many of the measures outlined in these bills come as a result of Labor's poor and reckless
financial management during their term of government. The coalition government has been
saddled with the task of responsibly getting the budget and the economy back on track. At the
last election Australians saw the need to return to proper, responsible and prudent
government, to put the nation's books back in order. Australian voters saw a need for less
grandstanding and more integrity. In short, they saw the need for a coalition government.
Now the challenge on this side of the House is to determine how best to repair the damage of
Labor's wilful neglect of the fundamentals of economic management. Our coalition
government promotes efficient policies—policies where government is able to deliver more
services for less money. Removing unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy will see taxpayers'
money actually improve frontline services rather than being wasted on backroom paperwork.

Against that background I want to raise the important question of our foreign aid system. It is
time that we redefine how we measure the impact of Australia's foreign aid. Instead of
foreign aid being judged by merely the number of dollars spent, the key indicator of a
project's success should be what is actually achieved on the ground. Let me be very clear: I
am a strong supporter of foreign aid in our region. But success should not be measured merely
by dollars spent. It must be evaluated by actual success on the ground, where it counts.
Equally, I do not claim to have all the answers to this challenge. Many of the world's best
minds have turned their attention to how to better achieve the goals of aid delivery. But my
discussions with aid recipients, donors, workers and governments continue to disclose that we appear to be just as far from a solution as ever.

In discussions on defence there has been this popular but succinct reference to the 'teeth-to-tail ratio'—a consideration of the funds and resources that go to the support services for our military as opposed to the actual fighting component. The aid debate confronts similar challenges. The cost of delivery of aid on occasions appears to outweigh the aid itself and in quite properly trying to protect the integrity of our aid system we burden ourselves with the bureaucracy and inflexibility that can overwhelm the good intentions. The capacity to respond quickly to issues, apart from an ambassador's discretionary fund, is under real challenge. For this reason, I believe that it is time to look at our aid delivery mix. While I was in Papua New Guinea with the Australian Defence Force I was inspired to some extent by a discussion that I had with Sir Peter Barter and Father Jan Czuba, the president of Divine Word University, about the benefits of institution-to-institution support as an effective method of aid delivery. It raised real questions in my mind as to how we can move forward in this field.

Importantly, it also raises questions as to how we might explore more effective partnership relationships to improve aid delivery. These alternatives range from public-private partnerships through to the whole question of social entrepreneurship. Often private companies already operating in country are in a better position to provide aid more efficiently and more effectively, where it is needed most, directly to the people who need it most, rather than duplication by often complex organisational structures with support staff. At least 80 per cent of today's assistance comes from non-public sources, up 30 per cent from 40 years ago, according to the US Agency for International Development's assistant administrator for global health. Private providers' foundations, non-government, faith based and community organisations as well as corporations and educational institutions bring the bulk of humanitarian funds to the world's needy nations, according to a 2008 press release from USAID. They have estimated that from an initial investment of $2.1 billion in public funds USAID was able to leverage an additional $5.8 billion in private funds and contributions. That is almost three private sector dollars for every dollar of public taxpayer funds. Yet financing from grants and foundations is not as readily available as in the past and the number of non-governmental organisations has increased significantly, thus increasing demands on public funds.

Social entrepreneurship has become a topic of significant study in the past decade, as non-profit organisations, which were the primary providers of service for the social good, began struggling to remain solvent. Social entrepreneurship includes businesses with primarily social objectives that reinvest the bulk of their profits either back into the enterprise itself or into the community. The world has witnessed a variety of experiments in government based efforts to tackle poverty. Such efforts lead to many notable successes, such as increased access to education and health care. In our region the success of microfinance schemes speaks volumes. Limits to government programs, however, have also been noted, with critiques that such programs are excessively bureaucratic, ineffective, wasteful, political and the antithesis to innovation. The risk of fraud, waste and abuse of power necessitated the dominant organising method of government agencies to be a bureaucracy. As a consequence, government agencies often lack the freedom to explore a wide range of alternatives, largely because they are hampered by bureaucratic rules, legislative mandates, political
considerations and a fixed budget. In summary, government is a tool that is effective for some kinds of social interventions but not as effective for others.

Many academics agree that foreign aid began with the four-point program of Harry S Truman in 1949. Part of the motivation behind aid was the race for developed nations to provide aid to Third World countries so they would not fall under the influence of communists or communist nations. As the concept of foreign aid evolved, some internationally recognised economists such as Jeffrey Sachs postulated that the key to ending extreme poverty was to help the poorest nations get their foot on the ladder of development. He indicated that, with foreign aid in the amount promised by developed nations, poor nations would be able to get enough of a boost to get on the first rung, from which they would be able to continue the climb independently.

William Easterly, a professor of economics at NYU, referred to the rich developed nations as 'the West' and the poorer or undeveloped nations as 'the rest'. On the other hand, Easterly believed that it was important for the West to recognise that development happens mainly through home-grown efforts and that, rather than imposing Western ideals of utopia on developing nations, we should instead concentrate on more modest, doable steps to make people's lives better. Easterly believed that the developed nations provide foreign aid and development programs through the lens of Western culture, with a focus on significant bureaucracy and planned approaches that do not involve the people the services aim to benefit. Easterly advocates resource use at a grassroots level rather than 'large international bureaucracies giving aid to large national government bureaucracies'.

The debate between Sachs and Easterly reflects the challenges of aid delivery and the reality that there is no magic pill, or should I say nanopatch, to resolve this debate. But there is cause for optimism. During my visits to Papua New Guinea, most recently through the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program, I was able to observe the positive force for good that some privately funded programs are delivering to communities in PNG.

The PNG LNG Project is an example. This joint venture between ExxonMobil and Oil Search has developed an efficient community health impact management program as part of their project constructing the LNG pipeline. Oil Search's community relationship work is highly regarded in PNG. Publications from the PNG LNG Project outline how they are working in partnership with the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research and Population Services International, and have developed a community health impact program to function across all project areas. PNGIMR is using an integrated health demographic surveillance system, or IHDSS, to monitor the impact of the PNG LNG Project on the health of communities, while providing the evidence base for curative and preventive interventions targeting key health problems. The IHDSS is used at key project locations and matched control sites to systematically collect objective health and population data. It also provides a timely response to disease outbreaks that could potentially disrupt project operations, through the placement of clinicians at selected key health facilities. These activities will ultimately enhance local healthcare delivery.

The PNGIMR Partnership in Health Project has been validated by the lenders group's review team and independent science advisory panel composed of internationally recognised tropical disease and demographic experts. Significant improvements in facilities' healthcare delivery have occurred in the PNG LNG Project villages, and invaluable health information
has been collected. This will enable provincial and national health authorities to effectively plan and implement health services.

The Enhanced Community Health Project incorporates community education, awareness and training to address health and wellness initiatives and encourage disease prevention, reproductive health behaviours and awareness of non-communicable disease issues. The following activities have been promoted through the Enhanced Community Health Project: marital relationship training to help reduce episodes of gender based violence and alcohol consumption and to reinforce positive health behaviours; water and sanitation hygiene activities; scholarships for in-service healthcare workers and preservice students from project areas to pursue health subjects at the Divine Word University in Madang; and STI and HIV/AIDS prevention along the Highlands Highway to help improve self-protection.

The PNG LNG Project also has a workforce development program. This aims to create local jobs for local people and train them in the technical and professional skills that are needed during the construction phase of the project, and, importantly, provide future employment opportunities either with the production phase of the project or elsewhere. Workforce development encompasses so much of what will contribute to the success of the PNG LNG Project. The project boasts that, at the end of August 2013, almost 7,700 Papua New Guinea citizens were employed on project activities. Building the skills of PNG workers through training is part of the project's National Content Plan and an opportunity to leave a lasting, positive legacy for PNG. As of August 2013, more than 10,000 Papua New Guinea citizens have been trained for construction and operation roles across all project sites, and more than 1.9 million training hours have been delivered through more than 4,160 courses.

Also of note is the operation of Site Skills Training, who have joined with the Ipatas Foundation in Enga Province to train 120 locals in areas of heavy diesel maintenance, construction and fabrication as well as camp services, cookery and logistics at the site's facility at Clark in the Philippines. The six months training will also include community skills, cultural and religious tolerance, and gender awareness. On successful completion, the participants, men and women, are guaranteed employment through Orion Project Services. As Vern Wills, the Managing Director of Site Skills Training, said at the launch last year, they 'provide a path of certainty for PNG nationals to gain the necessary skills to participate in the construction and operation of PNG projects.'

I have also recently met with a number of representatives from Abt JTA, which is a specialist international health and social sector consulting company that provides services to public and private sector clients. Our discussions included their involvement with private sector aid and development occurring in PNG. We discussed how effective it was, and how positive the results have been thus far. I have also spoken to representatives from faith based charity organisations and been briefed on the Churches of Christ medical centre in Vanuatu which far exceeds the capabilities of the government supported hospitals on the islands.

The success of these organisations provides real hope for the future of our aid delivery. Of course, nothing is simple in this field, and I appreciate the challenges in the area of capacity building. I am also acutely aware of the frustration of recipient governments and communities, who do want aid that acknowledges local needs and expectations.

This government is about providing a hand up, not a handout, about providing more for less. This government is about providing aid more efficiently and more effectively. Those
words are not mere rhetoric. In short, the success of our aid program must be measured by results on the ground, not by the dollar value of our aid budget. The more effective we are in delivering our aid, the more we can do to reduce the costs of delivery and increase the proportion actually spent on the ground. The more we do to achieve these goals, the happier will be the aid recipients, recipient governments and, of course, the taxpayers of Australia.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (18:08): I rise to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014 and the Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014. In these bills, the government is requesting that parliament approve additional expenditure, which largely reflects the government's decisions outlined in the 2013-14 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014 seeks approval for additional appropriations of just under $11.6 billion from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. The departmental appropriation provided in the bill is a one-off measure for the Department of Parliamentary Services operating costs for the 2013-14 financial year. Much of this is pretty standard, although I am not sure what chunk of those funds will be devoted towards moving the Attorney-General's bookshelf. I understand that it will be a significant part of that. I know it is a significant operation. It is soon to be a tourism project in Parliament House in and of itself, so I look forward to that adding to the tourism in the ACT, and I am sure that the Australian people are happy that they have contributed to nearly 50 metres of bookshelf for the Attorney-General! He does have a lot of books.

It has been six months since the election, so we are one-sixth of the way through the election cycle. Obviously, appropriations are all about governments laying out their agenda. So it is timely to have a look at where we were before the election on 7 September and also have a look at the state of play now, before I touch on some of the appropriation items.

When the Australian Labor Party took office in 2007, the Australian economy was the 15th largest in the world. When we left six months ago, our economy was the 12th largest in the world. It is also good to look at a few other things, just in case some of those other nations had changed. Six months ago, the ASX was trading at a five-year high. GDP was 2.6 per cent. Unemployment, at 5.7 per cent, was still the envy of the world. Inflation was at 2.4 per cent. Australia had been given a AAA credit rating by all three ratings agencies. We had experienced 22 years of continuous growth, so growth that had come in under Hawke and Keating had continued under Howard and then on to the Labor governments. As well, about one million jobs were created during that time of Labor being in office.

And then there were the other factors beyond those dry economic figures. According to the OECD's measurement of the best and happiest country in the world, Australia won those titles in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Obviously there were challenges, but it was helped by having those record low interest rates and government gross debt to GDP at 20 per cent. Then there were those other social investments, such as investing in education, as in the Gonski plan, and the NDIS—significant achievements that will be seen for years to come.

I would also put in there other significant investments like putting a price on carbon. I know you have a young child, Deputy Speaker Vasta. You obviously want to make sure that there is a planet around for your young child so that when he gives you grandchildren you will be able to talk to them. It is important that we put a price on carbon, and the most effective way to do that is obviously a market—not by buying magic dirt but by having a
market. It is the most cost-effective mechanism. And obviously, as we transition our economy, we need to invest in the jobs of the future. How do you do that? You invest in the National Broadband Network. They are some of the Labor legacies. I just wanted to touch base to compare where we were.

Obviously, before the election, where the Liberal and National parties received significant support from the Australian community, there were lots of promises. I seem to recall the then Leader of the Opposition, now Prime Minister Abbott, stating repeatedly that, if debt is the problem, more debt is not the answer. Since coming into government the Liberal-National Party government has borrowed about $50 billion. I will touch on that a little bit later.

They also said some other things. I remember running in 2007, 2010 and 2013. There were some joint tickets, such as on the renewable energy target. I know that there are climate change sceptics in the government at the moment, but basically everyone agreed that it was a good thing to invest in the renewable energy target—and also in jobs, taxation, health and education. All of those things were big-ticket items where the promises made before the election were completely different to how the government have acted since the election, in the last six months.

In fact, I remember those billboards about debt and discussions about debt. Every second press conference was about debt. And then one of the first pieces of legislation to go through this parliament was where the Liberal and National parties joined up with the Greens to effectively bring in unlimited debt, even after Prime Minister Abbott, in opposition, talking endlessly about our skyrocketing debt. Then they came in and brought in legislation to bring in unlimited debt. In the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook there were changes made to allow these increased debt levels.

This is the oldest trick in the book. It is basically where a government, when it comes in, says: 'Oh, my goodness! Look at the books! Look at these horrible things! We'll have to have a big audit, and then we'll start bringing in cuts.' I have seen the play book. You have seen the play book, Deputy Speaker Vasta, because it occurred right in Queensland under Premier Newman. They came in. They brought in an independent, trusted figure—sorry, no, they brought in Peter Costello; I beg your pardon!

He said, 'You need to cut things, you need to sell off assets.' That is what we have taking place in Queensland.

We look at the playbook being followed by Prime Minister Abbott who comes in with a bit of fudging of the figures, in terms of looking at PEFO and MYEFO, to say, 'No, the debt is horrible.' Then we wait for the commission of cuts, the National Commission of Audit, to provide its data. Obviously, it will particularly attack the lower to middle class. It will not be looking for savings in things like the mining tax, a profit-based tax, which is something that every sensible Liberal Party person should support. It would mean when businesses are making super profits, they give money to the Australian economy—to the Australian people. They are a little bit cyclical; that is the nature of the coalmining and iron ore industry. We had this argument 30 or 40 years ago when we were talking about offshore petroleum as well. It has delivered nearly $30 billion of savings to the Australian people. I could never understand why a Liberal government would be against this mining tax.
Let us have a look at what has happened in the last six months. The government's first budget document includes a $17 billion blow-out. This is a 50 per cent increase in the budget deficit compared to what we had outlined. Why is that? It is because a significant part of it is giving money to the Reserve Bank, nearly $9 billion. The Treasurer's decision to top up the Reserve Bank with $8.8 billion of borrowed money lacks any evidence. It is hard to see why he would do that. There are a couple of different reasons floating around; one is that he said that Labor had taken a larger dividend from the bank and that it seemed appropriate. However, if you adjust for inflation, the Howard government took about $3 billion per year from the Reserve Bank and Labor only about $1½ billion per year.

It is a simple tactic from the Treasurer to shift the blame onto somebody else—to target Labor. It is one of the sad things about this job. What I saw in opposition for six years I have seen continue for the last six months. There is no vision, no planning for the future and no fighting for jobs. Instead we have had more and more job cuts announced and we do not seem to have a plan emerging out of those opposite at all.

The reality is we have had job cuts announced at Holden, job cuts announced at Qantas and job cuts announced throughout the economy. When we left, there was solid growth projected by the same people who are giving information to the Treasurer. They projected solid growth. We know that the unemployment rate was low by historical standards. It still needed more work to be done, particularly in the area of youth unemployment; I know that is an emerging issue on the south side of Brisbane and in Brisbane generally. We do need to do more.

Under Labor we had gross debt projected to peak at $370 billion in 2016-17. That is the reality. There are calls from some to increase taxes, but I need to point out a few things. The federal tax-to-GDP ratio was 24 per cent under the Howard government. When we left it fell to 23 per cent. I know there are arguments about that, especially around some of those investments in social infrastructure like the NDIS and Gonski education funding. While they are social policies, they do deliver economic benefits. If you add together local and state government taxes we are still effectively a low-tax country. If you compare us to countries like the United Kingdom and New Zealand and work out their levels of government, they are nudging 40 per cent of GDP. That is nowhere near what we have here.

Now I come back to jobs. This has been a big issue in the parliament last week and this week. I remember an ad from when I was younger. I would leave St George and come to Brisbane where we would see commercial TV. I remember the advertisement that went 'Football, meat pies, kangaroos and Holden cars.' Now, sadly, under this Treasurer—a guy named after the Prime Minister of the day, Chifley, when the first Holden car rolled off the line—we have pressure on the Qantas kangaroo. It would be a shame to think that we are a nation that does not have a national airline; a nation that does not have our own cars. Who knows what the next target will be for Mr Abbott? Whether it will be football or meat pies I am yet to see. Effectively, we have seen 7,100 full-time jobs lost across the economy in January, taking the number of full-time jobs lost since the government was elected only six months ago to 63,300.

Given Labor's six per cent unemployment, I ask the government to reconsider this stand-off approach. I know they have articulated a stand-off approach when it comes to public transport; they made that clear. They are not interested in investing in public transport, I understand that. But when it comes to jobs, surely they need to see the cost to society. They
keep talking about the global financial crisis, forgetting that under Labor 200,000 jobs losses were averted. What does that mean? It is an easy figure to roll off, but that means households were kept together. That means kids did not have the shame, embarrassment and stress associated with having no jobs in the house. I am proud of that record under Prime Minister Rudd and Prime Minister Gillard. We kept people in their jobs. We kept the unemployment rate under six per cent.

Sadly, the current government is making decisions to assist the wealthy and those Australians who are in stable jobs. It seems to be a tactic where they are suggesting that anyone connected with unions. The unions' negotiating power tends to mean more stable jobs and higher returns. That is the fundamental benefit of enterprise bargaining. It is something that those opposite do not seem to understand. We do not want to go back to those days of centralised wage fixing. We need a market mechanism, and enterprise bargaining is that mechanism.

If they believe we should just let the market rip, I can take them to countries where that occurs. It is a horror for society, a horror for communities and a horror for young people in particular. It entrenches privilege, and that is not the sort of Australia we are about. We have always been a country where people have been able to get on in life, mainly through the mechanisms of support in the workplace and education—the two things that seem to be in the crosshairs for Mr Abbott and Mr Pyne.

Obviously, productivity is a significant factor. I remember the productivity data when we took office. It was effectively at zero. It is starting to trend northwards. Things like the NBN and some of the other major infrastructure investments are a good thing. I know infrastructure investment is something Australia does well. When we took office, of OECD nations, we were ranked 20th. When we left office, in terms of public infrastructure, we were ranked first. That turnaround will bring benefits and jobs for the Australian community for years to come.

It is now 177 days since the election. Prime Minister Abbott committed to an employment forum in my electorate to occur within 100 days of the election. That has not occurred. I am writing to him to ask for it to occur as quickly as possible. (Time expired)

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (18:23): I rise to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014 and the cognate bills, and to provide some context to the election commitments made to the Solomon electorate by the coalition during the 2013 federal election. Until self-government in 1978, the Northern Territory was effectively a sub-branch of the Commonwealth, with our decisions being made in Canberra on our behalf. Remnants of Canberra's administration still exist in the Top End, some of which are contained in the architecture on the various military bases around Darwin and a handful of old government housing complexes in and around the city.

One towering example of the Commonwealth's administration in the Territory exists in the monolithic form of the Royal Darwin Hospital. The hospital was commissioned for construction in 1974, based on Canberra's own Woden hospital design, which itself had been lifted from a Canadian model. Royal Darwin Hospital has about 350 beds, a workforce of approximately 1,500 and it is the only teaching hospital in the Northern Territory. Its services include anaesthetics, cardiology, emergency, intensive care, surgery, pathology and radiology, and it treats patients from right across the Northern Territory as well as, in some circumstances, north-west Western Australia.
The Royal Darwin Hospital is also host to the acclaimed National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, a Howard government initiative that is on call to respond to crises in the northern region. In the fewer than 10 years since it began operating, the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre has established an impressive CV including, most recently, sending two AusMATs and a field hospital to the Philippines to work with those injured as a result of Typhoon Haiyan.

As I mentioned earlier, the hospital design was taken from a Canadian template. That probably explains why Royal Darwin Hospital came complete with snow shutters. I do not ever expect that snow shutters will ever be required in beautiful tropical Darwin, but we have them in this hospital. The hospital has done remarkably well to have grown as the Darwin community has grown. I pay tribute to the incredible group of people who work there night and day to treat the often complex admissions through its doors. Over the next few years, the hospital is expected to reach capacity, and it is estimated that it will cost hundreds of millions of dollars to expand and grow the facility to meet future demands.

It is on that basis that I would like to thank my good friend the now federal Minister for Health, Mr Peter Dutton, who listened patiently to my constant demands about the need for the coalition to properly fund the construction of a new hospital in the Top End. Recognising that more money was required than the $70 million that was proposed by the previous Labor government for the funding of stage 1, I was able to secure an additional $40 million, which was confirmed during the election campaign. The coalition having been re-elected, that money is secure. The Commonwealth will contribute $110 million towards the construction of stage 1 of the Palmerston Regional Hospital. My good friend Northern Territory Minister Robyn Lambley confirmed that the Northern Territory government will contribute another $40 million. That is a total of $150 million which will be used for construction in stage 1 of the Palmerston hospital. As I have said a number of times, the Palmerston Regional Hospital was a key election promise for the people of Solomon, and it was my great pleasure to have both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Health in the electorate when that major announcement was made.

A few weeks ago the scoping study detailing the first stage of the Palmerston Regional Hospital services was released to the public. For the benefit of you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and others, I will cite some information contained in that document. The Palmerston Regional Hospital in stage 1 will be a level 3 service hospital, meaning that the care provided is for management of low-complexity and low-risk cases. General medicine will include cancer services, diabetes services, cardiology, gastroenterology, infectious diseases services and renal services. Maternity will include neonatal, obstetrics and paediatrics services. The core services provided will be supported by several clinical support services—for example, a 24-hour emergency department supported by pathology and pharmacy. The emergency department will incorporate 24/7 medical and nursing cover and will provide triage assessment, resuscitation and stabilisation. The Northern Territory government advises that some trauma patients—for example, those with serious head injuries—may be transferred to the Royal Darwin Hospital.

There are a number of private health service providers interested in being involved in the development of this new Palmerston hospital. The private sector involvement will ensure that the taxpayers' contribution will go further and maximise the new facility's capability. Work on
the Palmerston Regional Hospital is expected to begin later this year. As Darwin and Palmerston grow, so too will this very important facility.

The previous federal Labor government provided funding for a hospital to be built on approximately three hectares, a block the mayor of Palmerston said at the time was unsuitable for development. The new site has been selected by the Northern Territory Giles government and is on the corner of the Stuart Highway and Temple Terrace. It has approximately 40 hectares, so there is space for unlimited expansion as well as the development of ancillary services going forward. It is a site that will grow with the community. Anyone who has lived in Palmerston knows only too well that Palmerston is the fastest-growing city.

Nathan Barrett, who is contesting the seat of Blain for the Country Liberals in the upcoming by-election, is only too aware of how important it is to get the planning right and build a sustainable hospital that will grow with the community, unlike Labor's plan, which was basically done on the back of an envelope. Like me, Nathan has lived in Palmerston for over 20 years and understands firsthand what we need. I hope that he is elected because I am confident that he will be able to work with the other members of the Palmerston team—the member for Drysdale, Lia Finocchiaro, and the member for Brennan, Peter Chandler—to ensure that we get a state-of-the-art hospital that can be built in stages and grow with the Palmerston community. This will be possible because half of the coalition's additional $40 million contribution for the Palmerston Regional Hospital was funded in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, and I understand the remainder will be contained in this year's budget.

Tiger Brennan Drive is another key issue for Top Enders. During the election campaign, the now Minister for Foreign Affairs, my good friend the Hon. Julie Bishop, came to the electorate of Solomon and announced $70 million for the duplication of Tiger Brennan Drive, the second arterial road between Darwin and Palmerston. We have made this funding available earlier than expected so the Giles government can get on and build the duplication of the 12 kilometres of road between Berrimah Road and the Darwin central business district. This is a vital piece of infrastructure for all Darwin and Palmerston residents.

We also promised some CCTVs. The Minister for Justice, the Hon. Michael Keenan, is a long-time friend of the Territory and through the safer streets program he confirmed my request of $300,000 for the rollout of the CCTVs in crime hot spots around Darwin and Palmerston. At this stage, the cameras are earmarked for hot spots in Nightcliff, Karama and Palmerston, but the final decision will be made in conjunction with the Northern Territory Police Force.

Grassroots sports were also funded during my election campaign. The coalition are well aware of the important role local sports clubs and associations play in the fabric of the Top End community. South Darwin Rugby League Club will receive $99,000 for upgrades to the Warren Park ground, the home of junior rugby league; the Darwin Table Tennis Association will get $13,000 for the purchase of 15 internationally certified competition tables; $5,200 will go to the Berrimah Riding Club to erect shade sails over the horse wash at Robbie Robbins Reserve; and the Palmerston Football Club will get $8,700 for the construction of new player locker rooms.

My 2013 election commitments can be summarised as promises that will provide assistance to the community and to sporting organisations, tools to assist police in addressing
law and order, improvements to transport and infrastructure and significant funding for the construction of stage 1 of Palmerston Regional Hospital. Other promises, including scrapping Labor's carbon tax and stopping the boats that led to more than 1,000 deaths at sea were also part of my core promises. Unlike Labor, the coalition's election commitments in Solomon were targeted, costed and necessary; what is more, our promises will be kept. Labor, on the other hand, simply would not and could not keep their promises. In Solomon, I have had a number of groups come to my electorate office asking when they will receive the money that Labor promised. There were the oversized cheques for media purposes and the bells and whistles and the songs and dances that went along with Labor announcements. But there was one thing missing: the money. The cheques bounced when the organisations tried to cash them in. We already knew that we could not trust Labor with credit cards, but now it seems they have been writing rubbery cheques in marginal seats, particularly in my electorate. The reason for that is simply that Labor cannot be trusted to do what they say. Those on that side do not like hearing about their failures and, believe me, there have been many of them. The Labor way is simply to rewrite history and we see them do it time and time again.

The coalition government have been left to make the tough decisions that Labor simply were incapable of making. When Labor took government in 2007, they inherited a $20 billion surplus—an enormous amount of money on the back of the sound economic management by then Treasurer Peter Costello and the booming economy that created opportunities for anybody in the community who wanted to have a go. When the coalition took over management of the Treasury last September, we found that not only was the cupboard bare but the cupboard was full of unpaid bills. Labor left behind a projected budget deficit of $30 billion—$30 billion racked up on the credit card that will have to be paid off before the national budget can once again get back in surplus. Labor turned nearly $50 billion in the bank into a projected net debt of over $200 billion, the fastest deterioration in debt in dollar terms and as a share of GDP in modern Australian history. In interest payments alone, Labor's debt is already costing $10 billion and that is before we even get around to servicing the debt. Is it any wonder that Australians do not trust Labor to manage the national economy?

The tough measures the government will have to adopt going forward will be targeted. They will be designed to protect the most disadvantaged among us, but they will also be there to return Australia to a situation where we pay our own way and are responsible for our own financial destiny.

I conclude my speech today by paying tribute to the families, to the workers and to the businesses in my electorate who are out there having a go in the wonderful cities of Darwin and Palmerston. It is a great place to live and to raise a family and, with the sound guidance of the coalition government, I predict that in coming years it will only get better.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (18:38): I found myself quite absorbed when I was listening to the contribution by the member for Solomon. If I were to take at face value what she was saying and to believe what she was saying, I would also have to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of the garden because it sounded as though we were having a digression into Pollyanna's world, a world the member for Solomon would like to see existing rather than the world that does exist.

Here in Australia we have a government which was elected without a plan, one which has no vision and no policies. The Abbott government was elected on a platform that was driven
by a plan to undo rather than to do, to move back rather than to move forward, with a negative agenda driven by ideologues who have their vision of what the world should be and are trying to socially engineer our country, Australia, to put in place that social engineering—cutting welfare for the most marginal Australians while giving $75,000 to wealthy women when they have babies.

In the first two months alone, the Abbott government targeted school payments, small businesses, the environment, community safety and public programs. The schoolkids bonus was their first target, then vehicle depreciation for small business and the Climate Change Commission, an organisation the Prime Minister and those on the other side sought to ignore and to demonise rather than to listen to. Crime prevention grants that were funded in the last budget and set to go were abandoned. The NBN rollout is definitely under question and has been put on hold by those on the other side of this House. We really do not know what their plan is for a national broadband network. Each day it changes. It is a moving feast. Every time the minister has a new idea, a thought bubble, he throws it out there and then the next day it changes again. We are really not too sure what is happening with the NBN. Student debts could increase and I am worried about disability services being on the chopping block. And Centrelink services are being cut back.

This is what I find so amusing about the member for Solomon's contribution to the debate. One of the first acts of the Abbott government was to increase our credit limit to $500 billion—hardly the act of a fiscally responsible and frugal government. Add to that, that the debt level has increased and our budget deficit has blown out; yet it is put to us that those on the other side of this parliament have the answers. I would argue that the answers they have are bad answers—answers that are not delivering to the Australian people.

While the member for Solomon may have had a significant amount of money given to sporting groups in her electorate, with promises made prior to the election and every little community group being given a little bit of money, in Shortland electorate, unfortunately, the government has clawed back money allocated under the previous budget to a fantastic project in Shortland electorate, the Gulgul Barang Youth Support Centre. The Abbott government has refused to honour a funding commitment to build the Gulgul Barang Youth Support Centre at San Remo. The Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council donated the land and the former Labor government committed $2.7 million to build the centre in an area where it is starved of resources. Federal minister Warren Truss has refused to honour that commitment. It could have been a major boost for that region and a significant support for young people in the northern part of the Wyong Shire. I am really devastated that this project will not proceed. It was such a worthwhile project. It was to be a partnership between the Darkinjung people, the San Remo Neighbourhood Centre and a plethora of community groups that had come together. The local schools, the local employment agencies, the social inclusion program that was operating in the area—each and every one of those groups had contributed to this proposal.

Now those on the other side of the House, led by the Prime Minister and the Treasurer and of course in this particular case by Minister Truss, have decided that people who are deprived of resources—people who really need this so that they have a chance in life, so that they have the tools to actually find the jobs and become involved in every aspect of our society—are
being denied that opportunity. Instead of adopting an enabling approach and putting in place a Gulgul Barang centre, what this government decided to do was introduce a punitive approach.

It is planning—if we are to believe the reports in the media—to make cuts to people receiving Newstart if they are not prepared to travel 90 kilometres a day. I might add that except for the few jobs in the local area on the northern part of the Central Coast people in my electorate have to either travel to Newcastle for work or travel to Sydney, which comes into that 90 kilometres.

One area where people in my electorate could find work previously was at the Bluetongue Brewery. Carlton United has put on the record that it is closing that brewery. The member for Dobell said there are support services in place for those workers. Yes, that always happens when a business closes and a number of workers are made redundant. But what does not happen is more jobs. They are jobs that have been lost to the Central Coast just as we have lost 63,000 jobs throughout Australia since the Abbott government came to power. Holden and Toyota are gone from Geelong. At Qantas, 5,000 jobs will be gone, as will 1,000 jobs at Rio Tinto in the Northern Territory—all these jobs have gone under the watch of the Abbott government, which is supposedly there to turn the economy around and make Australia a better place. I would argue very strongly that the only thing the Abbott government has done is create a situation where a number of Australians are living in financial hardship and with very little hope of getting a job. This situation is going to be overlaid by punitive requirements, which the Minister for Human Services has signalled, for those people who are victims—I reiterate, victims—of this government’s policies. They will be punished by receiving lower payments under Newstart and by being forced to travel long distances to seek work.

A lot of noise has been made in the area of the disability support pension. The requirements to obtain that payment were tightened significantly under the previous government. A number of people who previously would have received the disability support pension and who have very little chance of finding work are now unable to access that payment. What this government is intending to do is make it a lot worse for those people. What happens to a person that physically cannot work, like the woman who came to visit me the other week who had been a machinist for 25 years? She could not use her hands. She had extreme pain in her arms and neck. She had an MRI that showed she had problems with the discs from the top of her spine to the bottom of her spine yet she was being denied access to the disability support pension. Is this the sort of society we want to live in, a society where on one hand you have very wealthy women receiving large payments for having babies—I have heard it said, the 'right' sort of women having babies—and on the other hand people who have worked hard and contributed to Australia and to our economy over a number of years being denied access to any sort of reasonable safety net payment? Those people who have worked hard and tried so hard, made enormous contributions to Australia, are now being targeted by what, I would have to say, is a very uncaring government. It makes me very sad that I represent people who look to government for leadership, look to government to be able to deliver to them, and all we are hearing from those on the other side of this House are statements justifying what they have done and the fact that they are going to cut, cut, cut. And the most vulnerable people in our society are going to be affected more than others.
Recently I was advised that the Medicare office at Charleston, which is the major shopping centre in the Lake Macquarie Newcastle area, is going to be co-located with the Centrelink office as a cost-cutting exercise. Let's not pretend it is not a cost-cutting exercise. The Centrelink office is already overworked. People who visit there are waiting very long periods of time. There are long queues. If you add to that queues of people attending the Medicare office then you are going to have even longer queues and an environment that will create anxiety among those people. Add to that the fact that the Medicare office, if it is co-located with the Centrelink office, will be in a place that has very poor parking and is hard for people to access. It is on a very busy road.

All I can say is that under this government it has been a series of cuts that are going to impact negatively on the people I represent in this parliament. Nineteen thousand people in Shorten electorate who would have received $500 a year from the government for their superannuation will now miss out. Businesses will no longer be eligible for a tax write-off because this government has reneged on the instant tax write-off for business assets costing less than $6,000 that was introduced by the previous government.

The crime prevention funds that were allocated out of the previous budget to groups in the Shortland electorate have been ripped back, clawed back, by this government—funds that were going to the Lake Macquarie PCYC and funds that were going to improve safety in Lake Haven.

This is a government, as Prime Minister Tony Abbott has flagged, that wants to curb growth in education and health spending. This is a government that is set to introduce a GP tax on people attending doctors. This is a very uncaring government. This is a government that is getting rid of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia, while it goes ahead with paying money to people who earn a high income and are having babies. This government stands condemned for its actions—for curbing spending for those people in Australia who need it the most.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (18:53): I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014. Representing the electors of Hasluck, I feel it is important to talk about the appropriation bills and the importance of these for my electorate and our country.

I was listening to the member for Shortland. One of the challenges and part of the issue that we have to seriously consider is that we cannot live beyond our means; we cannot continue to increase government debt. Significant items proposed for appropriation in the bills include: just over $8.8 billion to the Department of the Treasury, for a one-off grant to the Reserve Bank of Australia to meet its request to strengthen its financial position; just over $2.5 billion for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, re-appropriating amounts previously provided to AusAID, that are required this financial year for expenditure by DFAT; just over $1.1 billion for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, particularly including amounts for offshore asylum seeker processing; and just over $540 million for the Department of Defence for overseas operations, to supplement foreign exchange movements and for the re-appropriation of amounts between the appropriation acts aligning with Defence's current work programs.

The bills include significant appropriations for Defence to deal with priority pressures that were recognised by the former Labor government in their August 2013 economic statement.
This includes consolidation of Defence warehousing and fuel storage remediation by Defence to secure future efficiencies. This will have an immediate positive impact on jobs and economic activity in affected regional locations.

For six years under the Labor government, voters experienced broken promises and the infliction of unnecessary financial pain on families and businesses. I see that frequently in the electorate when I am out doorknocking or meeting with small businesses that have experienced the downturn in the economy and the lack of confidence and of spending by families, who small businesses have come to rely on as a core customer focus.

These bills will enable the Abbott government to get on with the job we promised we would do—deliver strong, stable and responsible government. The appropriation bill includes funding to enable the Department of the Treasury to make an $8.8 billion one-off grant to the Reserve Bank of Australia. In the minister's second reading speech, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance, the Hon. Michael McCormack said:

First, the bill includes funding to enable the Department of the Treasury to make an $8.8 billion one-off grant to the Reserve Bank of Australia. The grant will strengthen the Reserve Bank's financial position to the level considered appropriate by the board of the Reserve Bank. This will ensure that the Reserve Bank is adequately resourced to conduct its monetary policy and foreign exchange operations in an environment of financial market volatility.

Financial stability for the Reserve Bank is important for the economic confidence of the country. Australian voters were left with years of broken promises under the Labor government of budget surpluses and failed policies. One of them was the way financial commitments were made and then altered, or the way two pieces of legislation did not realise the level of revenue stated by the Treasurer at the time. After six years of chaos, the Labor Party left the coalition and the Australian public with record debt through their financial recklessness.

I listened with great interest to the speech by the Treasurer, the Hon. Joe Hockey, on the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2013-14 at the National Press Club on 17 December 2013. It was a revealing speech in respect to the challenges we face and the fiscal legacy of increasing debt left by the Gillard-Rudd government. I want to quote from his address:

The Coalition went to the Australian people with a plan to get the economy and budget back on track. That is what we will do and today is the first step.

... ... ...

Today we reveal the full impact on the Budget and the economy of six years of Labor Government.

... ... ...

We have inherited from the Labor Party Budget deficits totalling $123 billion over the next four years and unless we take action the Budget will be in deficit for at least a decade.

And we have inherited from Labor gross debt that will reach $460 billion within the next four years. Unless we take very substantial budget reform, it will rise to $667 billion over the next decade.

This document also forecasts economic growth to remain below trend of 3% for the next two years as the unemployment rate continues to rise to 6½%.

... ... ...

Based on new more realistic assumptions and, our determination to bring hidden budget problems out in to the open, the cumulative underlying cash balance has deteriorated by $68 billion in just four months.
Those figures are staggering when you consider the quality of life that we as Australians have become used to; we have adjusted our thinking and our planning, for our future for our children too. If those trends continued, then—as a former Labor Treasurer said because of his concern about the growing debt and challenges of the Australian economic situation—we could become a banana republic. I hope that we never head down that path. That is why the coalition are making the tough decisions required—so that we live within our means and so that what we provide for the future will be less debt, better services and better opportunities.

Many businesses in my electorate continue to feel the flow-on effects of the carbon and mining taxes. After the September election, when Australian voters emphatically rejected the Labor Party and their carbon and mining taxes, I find it inconceivable that those opposite refuse to accept the message sent at that election. It is time Labor stopped holding this government and this country back as we deliver what we said we would do—that is, that we would repeal these two taxes which are hurting families and businesses. I note the comments by the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Greg Hunt, that the carbon tax was a $7 billion hit on the economy every year and, more recently:

… the Clean Energy Regulator has released figures detailing the carbon tax bills for all liable entities for the 2012-13 financial year.

In its first year of operation, the carbon tax was a $7.6 billion hit on the Australian economy and a direct hit on around 75,000 businesses.

He said:

16 of the 20 largest carbon tax bills have gone to electricity companies. The power sector is being hit with $4.1 billion in additional costs …
Manufacturing has been slapped $1.1 billion—and that's putting pressure on jobs …
Regional and rural Australia is being hit with dairy and meat processors, and sugar refineries coping with carbon tax bills.

He continued:

Despite a $7.6 billion tax, emissions for the first 12 months barely changed by 0.1%.

It is time that the Labor Party and the Greens accepted the message from voters and the statistics in front of us and allow the government to get on with the job we were elected to do—that is, to remove these taxes.

I am looking forward to the rollout of the coalition's Green Army projects because three of these are in my electorate of Hasluck: Mary Carroll Park, Tom Bateman Reserve and Robinson Park. These three sites are an integral part of my electorate's local heritage and are significant environmental landmarks. Through the creation of the Green Army that will gradually build to a 15,000-strong environmental workforce, the coalition will create Australia's largest ever environmental deployment. It will mark the first time that Australia has approached environmental remediation with the same seriousness and level of organisation that we have long brought to bushfire preparedness and other local and regional priorities. Australia's unique landscape instils in us a deep appreciation of the fragility of the natural environment and the requirement to protect it. The Green Army complements our Direct Action approach to climate change, and Direct Action provides Australians with the opportunities for individuals, communities, organisations and companies to help address our environmental challenges. Our policy will ensure reductions in carbon emissions will take
place within Australia without slugging families, businesses and the economy with a great big carbon tax.

In addition, the following funds have been provided to organisations within my electorate. Under the Community Development Grants Program, there is $8,500 to the Abruzzo Molise Italian Club. Under the Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations, there is $4,950 to the Darling Range Wildlife Shelter, the Trustee for Save the Black Cockatoo Trust Fund. Under Home and Community Care, funding was split between federal and state governments 60-40 and totalled $847,769; Gosnells Community Support Services Inc., Silver Chain Group Limited, People Who Care, Chung Wah Association and the City of Swan were all recipients and will provide tremendous local services.

I also welcome the second appropriation bill, which provides the Department of Immigration and Border Protection with almost $750 million, which includes over $400 million for the offshore processing of illegal maritime arrivals and $220 million to address the backlog of maritime arrivals. Updates by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Scott Morrison, show that the coalition's policy of a comprehensive regional deterrence framework with our neighbours to prevent asylum seekers transiting through our region in an attempt to bypass our entry processes is working. I note comments by the minister on 21 February about Operation Sovereign Borders in which he said:

Operation Sovereign Borders is making progress. The boats have not yet stopped but they are stopping under the Abbott Government with people smugglers on the back foot and arrivals down to levels not experienced since the days of the Howard Government.

... ... ... The full suite of measures the Coalition is implementing, including operations at sea, are combining to prevent people smugglers from sending people on the dangerous boat journey to Australia. These are policies the previous government never had the resolve, will or interest in implementing. Preventing people who arrived in Australia illegally by boat from being resettled in Australia is one thing but preventing successful people smuggling ventures to Australia entirely is another. The commitment of $400 million for offshore processing is significant, following the issues relating to the Yongah Hill facility in Northam. Since August, there have been at least three groups who have escaped from the immigration detention centre facility. In just five months, this government has established a proven record in border protection, and the funding for offshore processing will ensure we continue the work we are doing in this important policy area.

The appropriation bills provide the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with almost $335 million. Further, the bills propose appropriations for the Department of Industry—instead of the former Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education. This is a significant move as part of the government's commitment to cut red tape and simplify the public sector.

I support the appropriation bills. The previous, Labor government had a shopping list of disasters: debt escalation; wasted money through GroceryWatch, pink batts; and broken promises like the carbon tax and the mining tax. The people of Hasluck never expected carbon and mining taxes that would impact on the quality of their lives. Now the Labor Party is standing in the way of people who are saying, 'We do not want a carbon tax.' The
appropriation bills will allow the government to continue the work we have started and the
job ahead of us to restore confidence in the economy and provide security for families.

Labor trashed the economy while in government, and scrapping the carbon tax is one way
Labor can undo some of the damage. It is time for Labor to get out of the way and allow the
passage of the bill to repeal the carbon tax and, more importantly, ensure that, through the
appropriation bills and other measures that are brought before this parliament, we give
financial stability and create the opportunities and the employment pathways that will be
available—as opposed to those businesses feeling the pressure of the carbon tax, with jobs
being lost and jobs going offshore. I want a country that looks to the future, that values our
youth and provides them with real opportunities and, equally, that allows for businesses to
flourish in an economy that encourages growth and the opportunities to develop
manufacturing, provides the range of services and leads to innovation, research and
opportunities that realise new products, new services and new opportunities for the young
people in this country.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (19:08): May I remind the House of the nature of the
amendment that we are seeking to agree to, because I note that, thus far, none of the members
opposite who have spoken in this debate on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-14 and related
bills have talked about the amendment. I know it is a general debate around appropriations,
but the amendment is relevant. The amendment says:

whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading the House notes that:

(1) the Government repeatedly stated before the election ‘that if debt is the problem, more debt is not
the answer’;

(2) the 2013-14 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook showed a $17 billion blow-out in the 2013-
14 budget deficit, which at the time represented a $167 million budget blow-out per day since the
Government took office;

(3) 60 per cent of the predicted budget blow-out in 2013-14 was due to the decisions of the
Government alone;

(4) the Government has sought to pave the way for deep cuts to the federal budget by deliberately
blowing out the budget and establishing its Commission of Audit; and

(5) these cuts would be another example of this Government saying one thing before the election,
and doing the complete opposite after it.

I think they are relevant observations to be made about the commitments made by the Abbott
government prior to the election and its statement about debt at the time of the election and
post. It also notes that we have an ever-increasing debt which is largely the responsibility of
decisions taken by the Abbott government.

Let's not be fooled. Whilst we understand the politics of blame and we understand the
politics of them arguing legacy issues that have brought disaster on the world, the fact is that
decisions directly taken by the Abbott government have led to ever-increasing debt. The truth
is that there were many promises and statements made by the Abbott government and by the
Prime Minister himself prior to the election which we know will be reneged upon. You will
recall that on SBS News the night before the election, the Prime Minister said: ‘No cuts to
education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the
ABC or the SBS.’ We already know about the mooted cuts to the ABC. As someone who has
a very large regional electorate where the ABC is really the only broadcaster, the only media
outlet, that actually communicates to the whole electorate, I know that the potential for cuts to
the ABC and therefore the services that they are providing to regional Australia should be
taken very seriously.

I wonder about the commitment made by the government on issues to do with regional
Australia in any event. To me, they have not shown a great propensity to understand the
importance of regional Australia or the issues engaged in regional Australia, despite the fact
that they hold almost all the regional seats bar just a small number. Indeed, I am the only
member of the Labor Party who holds a seat north or west of Brisbane. That is no source of
great pride, I have to say, because we should be holding a lot more. When I first came to this
parliament, the Labor Party held the seats of, for example, Leichhardt, Kennedy, Grey and
Kalgoorlie as well as the Northern Territory. We actually held all of those large regional seats
and now we hold only one of them—and that is a shame to us and we need to be
concentrating our efforts on understanding why it is that those communities have rejected us
in subsequent elections.

I have an issue which relates directly to northern Australia and directly to my own
electorate. Mr Deputy Speaker, you may recall—you may not; you may have missed this—
that on 16 January this year, the member for Leichhardt and the honourable the Deputy Prime
Minister issued a joint press release in which they announced a $210 million Commonwealth
package set to enhance the region's economy. Mr Truss, the Deputy Prime Minister, said at
the time:

This funding commitment is great news because it will boost the economy by upgrading key roads and
infrastructure to better connect areas of economic opportunity with the local communities.

Good on them: $210 million for the seat of Leichhardt!

Just cast your mind around the rest of northern Australia and ask what this government is
doing for the rest of northern Australia. I ask you not just to look at it in the context of me
talking about Lingiari but, most particularly, to look at what has happened at Gove and the
absolute lack of action by this government to invest in the communities of north-east Arnhem
Land to mitigate the impacts of the closure by Rio Tinto of their bauxite refinery. Just
understand what is happening here. This announcement was made at the end of November. It
meant that the Gove plant was effectively going to be put into mothballs at the end of July.
This shutdown process would commence early in February, so effectively the community had
two months to deal with the prospect that, on Rio's own figures, the town of Gove will go
from a population of 4,000 to a population of 1,200. Spending on Gove and the region
historically has been $460 million annually. That will drop to $170 million annually. This
decision means that this day people are leaving Gove and the region. I said Gove had 4,000
people. There are 14,000 people in the region of north-east Arnhem Land, mostly in
Aboriginal communities, who have relied on Gove as a major service centre. If you take away
2,800 people out of a community of 4,000, it has impacts on all the services that are being
provided by the town and in the town. It has impacts on every small business in the place. For
example, one small business with a rental bill of $11,000 a month has an income of less than
$300 a day as a result of the decision.

Bear in mind that I talked about the $210 million announced for Leichhardt. Since this
decision was made, there has been no effort by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime
Minister, the minister responsible for regional Australia or the Minister for Industry—none of
them—to talk to or communicate with anyone in relation to these issues in north-east Arnhem Land. The Northern Territory CLP senator, who is a cabinet minister, Senator Scullion, has not bothered to grace the doors of people in Gove to explain why this government is prepared to spend $210 million in Leichhardt when in their time of need, when the community has been gutted and has been hit by a disaster of cyclonic proportions—man-made and devastating to jobs and services in the community—not one finger has been lifted by this government to put in place a structural adjustment package of the type that might provide the infrastructure and other job options for people into the future. That is an absolute disgrace.

We had the Prime Minister in Darwin last Friday and Saturday doing a noble thing, welcoming home Australian troops who had been fighting in Afghanistan in 2013. It was a wonderful thing and I was very proud to be part of it. He arrived in Darwin on Friday and delivered a joint statement with the Northern Territory Chief Minister about northern Australia but could not be bothered, either on the way up or on the way home, to drop into Gove and see people who want to see him. What does that tell you about our Prime Minister? What does it tell you about this government? What does it tell you about their motivation in working with people in need in this country—people who really are feeling it in such a way that they are required to uproot and leave their homes? There are no jobs, but there is nothing from this government to mitigate those decisions or try to remediate the situation.

I talked earlier about the Prime Minister's statement that there would be no cuts. Let him explain how it is that he can say, firstly, that he was on a unity ticket with Labor about the funding going into education when Labor committed $14.65 billion over six years for school funding and there is now only $2.8 billion over four years from this government. What is that if not a funding cut? The Prime Minister said before the election, 'You can vote Liberal or Labor and you'll get exactly the same amount of funding for your school.' What absolute rot!

We know also that despite providing funding of $10 million for truancy in 18 schools in the Northern Territory—a positive thing that the Commonwealth government is doing, I might say—they have done nothing to ensure that, once the kids get to school, there are sufficient teaching resources and support staff to give the kids a quality education. At the very same time the Commonwealth government is stumping up this money for truancy officers, the Northern Territory government is pulling teachers and support staff out of the schools. What does that tell you about the commitment of this government to education? It is all right for Senator Scullion, the minister who made this announcement, to say this is a matter for the Northern Territory government. You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, that under the previous Labor administration the Commonwealth government gave the Northern Territory government over $110 million for an additional 200 teachers in schools around the Northern Territory. At the very same time, the conservative CLP government of the Northern Territory cut teachers. You cannot have it both ways, and I do not accept at all that the Commonwealth government is actually committed.

We know about higher education. The mooted Higher Education Support Amendment (Savings and Other Measures) Bill, which over four years will rip out $900 million in efficiency dividends from the Commonwealth grants to universities, will have a massive impact in the Northern Territory. Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and Charles Darwin University will lose some $900,000 over four years. This will impact directly on 2,163 students and 299 university staff studying and living in my own electorate. Based on
the number of youth allowance, Abstudy and Austudy recipients living in my electorate, the abolition of the student start-up scholarship might cost some 124 students in my electorate over $100,000 in scholarships over the next four years. You can't have it both ways. How can the government, how can the Prime Minister, say there will be no cuts when we know that they have cut $1 million from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health programs for 2013-14, they have taken $5 million from the Chronic Disease Prevention and Service Improvement Fund over four years from 2013, they have taken $22.3 million over four years from the National Rural and Remote Health Infrastructure Program and they have taken $6 million from the Public Health Program in 2013-14. You just cannot believe them.

So it is all very well for members opposite to get up here and beat their breasts about how great their government is, but the fact is that this Prime Minister went to the election saying that there would be no cuts in education, no cuts in health and no cuts to the ABC, but now it is writ large that there are cuts. That is going to impact directly upon people who can least afford to have cuts made. The education outcomes for Australians and the health outcomes for Australians are of most concern to the people of my electorate, the poorest Australians in the country.

Dr STONE (Murray) (19:23): With International Women's Day just past I rise to speak on an issue of national significance but which may come as a disturbing surprise for many Australians. Given our tragic history in Australia, when many Indigenous families suffered long separations or the permanent loss of their children and many were restricted in their rights to live where they chose and partner whom they wished, it is deeply concerning to find that the rights and preferences of some Indigenous women who are about to give birth are not always respected, even when medical risk is minimal or can be virtually eliminated. This is about the failure of state and Northern Territory governments in particular to deal with the remote area needs of Indigenous mothers.

While most Australian women await the imminent birth of their babies comforted by the support of their partners, their mothers, other close or extended family or their friends, Aboriginal women living in remote parts of Australia cannot await a birth in those circumstances. At 36 weeks into her pregnancy, no matter what her state of health or how many healthy babies she has already delivered, the remote Indigenous woman is expected to board a bus or plane and go to await the birth somewhere near a hospital that still delivers babies. She may be accommodated in a young working men's hostel, as in Western Australia, or in a caravan park, sharing an ablutions block some distance from where her caravan is, and in the freezing cold in winter. Or she may be in a crowded dormitory. She will rarely be escorted or have a support person with her, and she will quite often have left her other children, if this is not her first birth. She will have left the significant others in her life and her other family commitments for the four or five weeks awaiting the birth. So the pregnant women must leave other children, including toddlers. You can imagine the bonding issues and confusion for a younger child when their mother reappears after four or five weeks with a brand-new baby taking up a great deal of the mother's time.

Not only has the pregnant mother had to make complex arrangements with others in her community to care for her other children, her partner is not able to support her emotionally or in any other way in her final critical weeks. He cannot attend the birth, even if that has been his or his partner's wish. The pregnant woman is also without the support of her own mother.
or others who in her community can give her care, especially in the final stages of her pregnancy. As Mrs Maher, one of the participants in the roundtable I will describe in a minute, said: 'Is it any wonder that they do not want to leave?"

On 30 May 2013 members of the House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Standing Committee decided to hold a roundtable discussion here in Parliament House where a number of the midwives and other medical service providers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, could give us their views and share their knowledge about the issues surrounding the birth experiences of remote Aboriginal women. At least one of these women had been living in a remote settlement herself when she first gave birth, and she was forcibly relocated.

The participants at the roundtable conducted in May last year included Ms Karen Atkinson, a midwife and member of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses; Mrs Millie Hills, the project manager for the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council; Mrs Anne Maree Maher, President of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses; Mrs Rachel Sargeant, team leader, Child and Maternal Health, Apunipima Cape York Health Council; Mrs Meleseini Tai-Roche, Coordinator, Regional Maternal and Child Health, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council; and Miss Danielle Weise, community midwife and child health nurse, Apunipima Cape York Health Council. The transcript of this roundtable can be found in the official committee Hansard reports of 30 May last year. The committee secretariat has just rechecked with these participants a week or so ago to make sure that I am not reporting on something that has recently changed. I wish I was, but in fact the conditions I am about to refer to and describe have not changed. The situation is the same for these remote Indigenous women. It is a sad situation.

I quote from these midwives and the other remote area health professionals who participated. Mrs Sargeant is speaking. She begins by introducing herself. She then explains:

"We look after 12 communities at Cape York. That averages about 160 births a year. We provide midwifery and child health services. All our child health nurses are midwives as well, so they will often do a dual role which is great for continuity. They are fly in, fly out. All of our registered nurses are midwives or have partnerships with specially trained maternal and child health workers who are community based. So they lead the way; it is a health worker led program that we provide, taking a lot of cultural guidance and appropriate management from there."

The committee then asked where the communities' babies were actually born. Mrs Sargeant replied:

"In Cairns base [hospital]—there is no other option—at the main delivery suite at that facility … Currently there are no other options. If ladies dare not come down they are considered to be absconding and threatened with the Department of Child Safety. This is at 36 weeks—a good month before their due date, and often they may go over."

The committee chair asked what they were threatened with. Mrs Sargeant then explained:

"They are threatened with the Department of Child Safety becoming involved with their management because if they do not leave their home at 36 weeks into the pregnancy they are 'deemed as not responsible'."

The chair asked for clarification—if in fact the Queensland child safety department can actually activate official interest in the still-to-be-born. Miss Weise, a midwife from the Kowanyama community of 1,100 people, answered:
It is an unborn risk notification.

Mrs Sargeant explained:

… if they do not comply with this recommended schedule and policy of management of their antenatal care and leave their community, friends and family and live down in Cairns, they are threatened with the Department of Child Safety. It depends on a lot of other circumstances, but that threat is used regularly for ladies …

Miss Weise stated:

It is not a government policy—it is just a threat. It is there and it is used.

Mrs Sargeant added:

It is standard practice.

The women who are sent to Cairns stay in a cheap hotel room if the much better 20-bed hostel at Edmonton is full, but this hostel is for Indigenous women only, so the women's partners cannot stay, nor their children. The women are paid a $33-a-night subsidy, and so finding the rest of the cost is often very problematic. Mrs Sargeant noted that, in relation to accommodation at the hostel:

This is very difficult when you have different clans in the same room and it is completely inappropriate.

Mrs Maher also reported her experience of working in rural New South Wales. She said:

I have worked also in Walgett, New South Wales, which does not seem very remote to most people but women are not allowed to birth in Walgett. They have to catch a bus at their own expense to Dubbo, which is three hours away—again, at 36 weeks. There is no accommodation supplied; they have to find their own accommodation. They have their baby at Dubbo hospital and then a day or two afterwards, because they want to come home, they get on a bus and come home.

On day 3, their milk comes in. They have got no support—no midwife—and they do not know what to do. All their mothers bottle-fed—the whole generation of mothers before—so not only is it about where you birth, it is about the support you get before and after. There were seven midwives from Canberra who would fly in fly out to Walgett. Walgett is not remote, but they could not get anyone to work there.

Mrs Tai-Roche works in remote East Kimberley. She reported:

Mine are very, very similar issues.

In her words:

The birth journey for Kimberley women varies depending on where they are geographically … What it looks like for really remote communities and particularly for East Kimberley women, is a Greyhound bus—usually a mail plane and a Greyhound bus—at 36 to 38 weeks.

And she said that journey:

… can take two days in and out … women are out—

of hospital—

… two to three days post birth and back onto a Greyhound bus.

Unless the woman is under 18 or particularly unwell or is high risk, there is typically no funding for an escort to accompany her on the bus or plane journey, or to stay with her while she awaits the birth.

Obviously, all women need a safe place to give birth, with appropriate facilities and expert care should there be an emergency, and many remote Indigenous women and their babies do
need special medical care, given the state of their health; that is widely and broadly acknowledged. However, we are concerned that, for these women, there are no options even when their state of health is fine, when there are other options and when they have previously had healthy babies.

Ms Atkinson gave examples of the practice in Flinders Medical Centre where pregnant women with rheumatic fever heart disease go to give birth. She stated:

Flinders Medical Centre will not accept a client that is retrieved without an escort, so they all have to have an escort.

She felt that that was a very appropriate thing to do, and of course we would all agree, but she went on to say:

The main thing with ladies … from the Top End is that they would arrive with next to nothing and it is freezing … They have no money, they have got no Medicare card … They might have their Basics Card with them, which is totally useless in Adelaide because there is only Target in the city and all the Caltex servos that take that Basics Card …

Mrs Sargeant told the committee about the close relationship that develops between midwives and health workers and the pregnant women in remote communities. However:

When the ladies get flown out at 36 weeks, they get put into a system which is so different …

No-one might speak their language. They are in:

… a hospitalised, once a week, ante-natal, really busy clinic, where they do not know the midwife and they will see somebody different every time they go who may not be aware of the often very complex social situations and family situations that the midwives and health workers looking after them in the communities are very aware of and can manage their care around. Again, it is a very daunting experience.

Following that roundtable discussion, we in the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs put together some targeted recommendations to the Commonwealth government. I want to refer to these now because I think this is a very significant issue. It is one we must deal with urgently and it is one that the states and territories are not dealing with as they should.

The recommendations are: the Commonwealth recognise as distressing and damaging the practice of requiring that Indigenous women in remote areas with normal pregnancies relocate alone to an urban area near a hospital weeks before the birth; the Commonwealth works with states and territories to change this policy of mandated removal by providing greater support and resourcing for the provision of more child health nurses and midwives in remote Indigenous communities; the Commonwealth support improved access to safe and appropriate accommodation for Indigenous mothers and their families if they must be away from their home communities to give birth, including providing for their other children and partners; the Commonwealth provide more culturally appropriate support for mothers if they must be away from their home communities to give birth, including a skilled case manager who can communicate in the mother's language and maintain contact after the birth; the Commonwealth ensure there are resources to improve breastfeeding support for Indigenous mothers, given that women in remote areas are frequently discharged from the hospital before their breastfeeding is established; appropriate and safe transport should be provided to women and their babies who have to leave or return to their home country; and the Commonwealth work with the states and territories to introduce an acknowledgement of a child's home
country on all Indigenous children's birth certificates when the mother would normally reside in the home country but has needed to leave to give birth. This last is obviously a very important matter for Indigenous children when later in their lives they want to register for or prove their traditional ownership status in relation to certain country. I want to stress that these are recommendations from the committee and have no status other than as recommendations, but we have passed them to the minister and I know he will consider them. We have also asked the minister to discuss them with the appropriate state and territory ministers who have responsibility in this area.

Finally, I want to say that, if anyone is in any doubt about the history of women being separated from their babies in the Australian Indigenous community, I want to refer them to 1913, 23 July, and the South Australian parliamentary proceedings and the progress report of a royal commission on the Aborigines in Australia. This is from a documentary history that I compiled in the 1970s. This parliamentary proceeding talks about removing children—in particular, half-caste children—from their mothers.

The Hon. J Jelley asks Mr EC Stirling, 'What would be a suitable age to remove them?'—meaning the children—and the answer is:

I think when they are about 2 or 3 years of age.

The chairman says:

You would not recommend that they be taken away when they are absolute infants?—No; because then you would have the burden of them that all children are at such a young age. When they are a couple of years of age they do not require so much attention and they are young enough to be attractive.

And he says:

Do you think that their experience of two years with the black mother would seriously interfere with them?

Mr Stirling's answer is:

No. There would not be time for them to establish habits and customs. I am quite aware that you are depriving the mothers of their children, and the mothers are very fond of their children; but I think it must be the rising generation who have to be considered. They are people who are going to live on.

I want to say that we have not come much further from sentiments like that in parliament if we are still having women with perfectly normal pregnancies forced to leave their home country, away from their partners, their mothers, their sisters and their other children, at 36 weeks into their pregnancies. They then have to spend the next four to six weeks in totally alien and, to them, often hostile surroundings. It is not good enough in 21st century Australia. We need to do much better. So I urgently commend those recommendations we made to the minister, and I hope they will receive state and territory support.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence) (19:38): I rise to provide an update to the House on the Morwell mine fire, near the Hazelwood power station, which has attracted a lot of media attention in recent times. The fire continues to cause concern for a large number of residents in the Morwell region and the broader Latrobe Valley, residents who have been affected by both smoke and ash for more than three weeks now. There are some people who are angry. They are frustrated and concerned about the delays in suppressing the fire and the potential impact on their health and the wider
community. It is human nature for some people to be anxious and upset in what is a very difficult situation.

I mentioned at the outset the media attention. I would like to appeal to the visiting media, primarily the metropolitan media, to be sensitive to our local community at this time. It is a very stressful time, and it has been going for more than three weeks. My local media—the ABC, 3TR, Latrobe Valley Express and WIN TV—have all acted very responsibly in highlighting the emergency warnings during the original outbreak and also have sought to raise legitimate concerns when they have come to light, but I think some of the metropolitan coverage has left a bit to be desired. I just urge those attending from out of town to make sure that they try to give some balance to the arguments, to reflect the community's views but also the enormous effort which is underway to overcome these very difficult issues. I accept that it is a very genuine news story, and I have no problem whatsoever with journalists and camera crews travelling to the Latrobe Valley to cover this event. I just urge them to be as balanced as they possibly can and not to fall for some of the extreme views which are being expressed by people with a hidden agenda who are also visiting our region.

On that point: the influx of people with political issues to push during this event is something that disgusts me. We have these camera-seeking activists and politicians who would not have been able to find Morwell on a map three weeks ago, and they are now beating a path to our community. I would like to take this opportunity to warn Gippsland and Latrobe Valley residents, in particular the Morwell and district community, that not all is what it seems with some of these visitors to our town. They are not acting in Morwell's best interests.

I would like to refer specifically to the Greens new-found interest in Morwell. Last weekend we had Senator Di Natale in the region expressing his concern for the health of residents, and I take that at face value. We have had the Victorian leader, Greg Barber, demanding that a state of emergency be declared. But what concerns me is that there seems to be a pattern of behaviour here where the Greens are trying to profit politically from the misery of others in the Latrobe Valley.

Everyone knows what the Greens true agenda is because it is published on their own website. I refer this evening to the website of the Greens and to this document in relation to the Hazelwood power station, which this fire is burning alongside. This document—for want of a better word, we will call it a poster—in reference to Hazelwood power station, is Headlined 'Hazelwood horror': It says:
It's evil! It's toxic! 2005's most polluting power station in the industrial world! … what can I do?
It says:
It's dirty and unnecessary and it's time for it to go.
This is what the Greens are putting out. This is the propaganda they are putting out:
The best time to close Hazelwood was yesterday but the next best time is today.
'Take urgent action now to help us replace Hazelwood.'

I say to the Greens: how can you pretend to care for my community when your real plan is actually to take their jobs away? If you shut down Hazelwood power station and 500 jobs go tomorrow, what would that do to the health of the people in the Latrobe Valley and the broader Gippsland community?
The vast majority of my community has already seen through the holiness of the Greens and their antijobs agenda. In the last federal election, I think they returned a primary vote in the order of six per cent, so I suppose there is some concession for the Greens. They did beat the Palmer United Party, but that is about the only one they beat in the election campaign. I urge people in my communities to be very careful when they assess the comments being made by people who have just visited our region for the specific purpose of achieving a headline or getting their face in front of a camera.

Deputy Speaker Mitchell, as you would be well aware from your own electorate, fighting fires like this is primarily a state responsibility. The state agencies are on the ground and are both responding to the fire event and trying to meet the needs of the community more generally. I would like to take this opportunity—as I am sure you have in your own electorate, Deputy Speaker—to thank the volunteers particularly from the CFA but also from the Red Cross, the State Emergency Service and the whole range, the whole gamut, of community volunteer groups that make up our wonderful regional communities. They have been simply sensational in a very difficult time, so I particularly want to thank the volunteers for the work they have done.

More broadly, I want to thank the emergency service workers, the professional workers, in the sense of our fire and police personnel and our ambulance personnel but also the mineworkers, the mine firefighters, who have been very much at the forefront of this event in trying to suppress this fire, which, as I said, has been going for more than three weeks now. The health officials as well have been very busy. They have been extraordinary in their diligence in making sure that they are on hand to try and reassure residents, and they have been working long hours in these very difficult circumstances. And the much-maligned group that does not get much praise from communities is our local council workers. The council workers in the Latrobe Valley have had experience in dealing with tragedies in recent times. They are very good at responding to natural disasters, and they have been on the ground in numbers again helping our community.

Disturbingly, we believe that the fire that ignited the blaze in the Morwell mine was actually deliberately lit outside the mine. The Victoria Police have advised the public in recent days that the fire is believed to have started at a site on the Strzelecki Highway which is located between Morwell and Mirboo North on 9 February at about 1.30 pm. An arson chemist has inspected the site, and police are treating the fire as suspicious. They are appealing for public information. The details are quite specific: somewhere around 1.30 pm on 9 February during that appallingly hot day with difficult conditions and strong winds, the worst time to light a fire, it is believed that an arsonist was at work. It sickens all right-thinking people in our community to know that there is someone out there who has shown no regard whatsoever for life and property, has lit this fire and has caused the damage that it has caused. I appeal to anyone with information to contact their local police or Crime Stoppers and report that information.

I have told the House previously that the key issues as I see them in relation to the Morwell mine fire are threefold. Our No. 1 priority right now is to suppress the fire, and work is going on in that regard. We need to keep on caring for the health of the community, and then we need to deal with those longer-term issues of preventing a recurrence of the fire. I note that the state government Deputy Premier announced on the weekend that an inquiry will be held.
once the fire situation is controlled. I think that is a good thing; it is a wise thing. We need to learn from any mistakes which may have made in the past and take steps to prevent such an incident occurring in the future. Last week I raised the issue about the site where the fire has occurred—it is in a disused part of the mine. I raised the issue of whether it had been fully rehabilitated; keep in mind, this was 30 years ago. It was back in the old days of the SEC. Whether it was properly rehabilitated or not is one thing that will need to be fully explored as part of the inquiry process.

It is fair to say that at various times over the past three weeks people in the Morwell community have contacted my office and expressed their concern and their frustration, and that they have felt neglected. This event has impacted on them for so long. I would like to assure them that a great deal has been happening. It may not have always been obvious to them, but a great deal has been happening both behind the scenes and on the fire suppression front.

In relation to suppressing the fire, I get regular updates from the Hazelwood mine and also from the CFA. I understand there has been some very good progress made over the past few days and that fire activity in the mine has significantly reduced. That is a good thing. Obviously, when the fire activity is reduced the smoke that is generated by the fire is also reduced. Hopefully, if the prevailing wind conditions do not push the smoke towards the Morwell South community, there will be some relief for the local community. It is worrying that tomorrow, Tuesday, could be a challenging time for the firefighters. I understand that additional CFA strike teams have been brought into the region specifically in anticipation of the risk that fires may escape from the mine as they did last week. The intention is to have those strike teams respond to anything that occurs in that sense so that resources do not have to be diverted away from the main firefight, which is within the mine itself.

The strategy being used quite successfully along the coal bed is that an aviation fire tender that carries 9,000 litres of water and using an onboard nozzle, which actually seeks to penetrate the coal, drives through and cools an area. Then we have the compressed air foam units: the aerial trucks apply foam to soak into the fire for a few hours before the crews use thermal-imaging cameras to help extinguish the remaining hotspots. It is a pretty high-tech firefight. It is difficult to suppress coal fires—everyone is aware of that. It is heartening that progress is being made, but it is worrying that we are still looking at many more days of this fire continuing. We are in the lap of the gods, to some extent, in relation to the weather conditions and whether they assist the firefighters or act as a hindrance, as we fear they may tomorrow.

While this ongoing firefight is continuing within the Morwell mine itself we have, at the same time, a recovery operation underway. This is making things even more difficult for the state government agencies. In the nearby community, particularly the most impacted area of Morwell South, there is a whole range of activities underway in terms of trying to help the residents in that part of the region. There is a community respite centre in place which has been opened at the Moe town hall. It is providing local residents with access to information on the government services that are available to them, some general health information, and temporary respite from the smoky conditions. People are being invited to seek temporary respite in Moe, which is a township only 10 or 15 kilometres away. I thank the people of Moe for the support they are showing to their neighbours in Morwell. In addition to that, for
residents who are concerned about the health impacts or potential health impacts of the fire, there is a community health assessment centre. It is located in Morwell itself at the Ambulance Victoria Gippsland regional office, which is adjacent to the Mid Valley Shopping Centre, and is providing basic primary health assessments to local residents. The centre was first opened on 21 February and expanded on 27 February. It has been providing an outstanding service. I visited there last Sunday and met some of the paramedics and health department staff who were there. They are providing primary health assessments such as blood pressure, heart rate, temperature and basic respiratory checks, such as chest sounds and respiratory rate, to reassure people that they are not at risk or to encourage them to seek further advice—either through their local doctor or the hospital if that is required. In addition to the respite centre and the health assessment centre, there is a community information recovery centre, which is in operation in Hazelwood Road in Morwell. There is a wide range of services there, from Latrobe City Council through to the Department of Human Services; the Red Cross; the Victorian Council of Churches; Ambulance Victoria; and EPA Victoria and the fire services themselves. This was established by the Department of Human Services in conjunction with Latrobe City Council.

For those residents who are having trouble breathing there are dust masks available for community members from Latrobe City Council headquarters in Morwell, at the Morwell library and at Morwell leisure centre. I understand that V/Line has been offering to help people travel out of the region by providing a free service for Morwell residents travelling to Melbourne; return services from there are on offer as well. Morwell residents wishing to take up that free travel offer can get in contact with V/line through their friendly staff at the local Morwell station. That is a good thing to see as well.

The community support has been outstanding. We have had groups like Scouts Victoria, which has offered hundreds of beds at scout camps across Victoria to the Morwell families who are choosing to take a break away from the smoke. Free accommodation has been made available at these popular campsites over the Labour Day long weekend as well, which will help some of the Morwell families and groups who are seeking a few nights in a different environment. I would encourage anyone who does choose to relocate to make sure they contact the Red Cross and register their intended location to help the authorities keep track of where people have moved to.

I would like to reassure residents that I have spoken to Victoria Police and been told that additional police patrols have been made available to keep an eye on their properties if they do relocate. As we know, on these occasions sometimes there are others who seek to profit from misery and cause mischief, for want of a better phrase. I am reassured Victoria Police is on top of that issue as well.

As members would expect, if this is going on there is a need for financial assistance to help people who may not have the capacity themselves to relocate. I can report that the federal government has supported the Victorian government at all times during what has been a very traumatic event. I have personally provided updates to the Prime Minister and the justice minister, who I know has also received regular updates and briefings from Victorian emergency services Minister Kim Wells. In Morwell on Friday we had the Premier, the Deputy Premier and health minister making an announcement that the Chief Health Officer had recommended some at-risk people relocate on a voluntary basis. The temporary
relocation is encouraged for people who: are aged over 65; have preschool aged children; are pregnant; or have a pre-existing heart or lung condition, living or working in the Morwell South area or south of the railway line. The full advice on the temporary relocation is available through the Department of Human Services.

To assist people with that, the federal government is supporting the Victorian government with the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. Under that, category D assistance provides for voluntary relocation payments of up to $1,250 per week per eligible household, to allow vulnerable residents living in that part of the fire affected area to temporarily relocate away from the smoke. The cost of this package will be shared by the Commonwealth and the state, as is the normal practice under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

The state government has also recognised that there is significant risk of damage to the reputation of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley more generally, and there is a concern that jobs may be at risk in the future. I understand the Victorian Premier has announced a $2 million fund to provide assistance directly to businesses affected by the Hazelwood fire. Their additional support measures will also include specialised coaching and advice for small business owners.

I close by simply saying this is a very difficult time for the people of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley and surrounding communities. I have been working with my state colleague the member for Morwell, Russell North, my federal neighbour Russell Broadbent and the local council, and I am confident that the response and recovery effort is on track. I am reassured by the state government that everything that is able to be done is being done and resources are being applied where required. Mr North in particular has worked tirelessly since the fire started and is doing everything in his power to assist his community. I wish the Morwell and district community all the best in the coming days and can assure them that both the state and Commonwealth government will assist them wherever possible.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Government Whip) (19:53): Mr Deputy Speaker Mitchell, it is good to see you back in the chamber. I know full well that you know the hardship that is going on in the seat of McEwen with the recent fires. I know the thoughts and prayers of the people from my electorate are going out to that electorate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): Thanks, mate.

Mr BUCHHOLZ: Today, in the debate on the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014 and the cognate bills, I would like to raise some of the economic underpinnings in the budget and also the effects the bills will have in my electorate of Wright. I would like to speak to three points. Firstly, I would like to outline some of the new packages—in particular, the drought package. I will then go to the economy that we inherited as a government when we came into office. Finally, I will outline the coalition's plans to turn the situation around.

The drought relief package was welcome. It builds on the Labor reforms with reference to the abolishment of exceptional circumstances boundaries in drought affected areas. Under the old scheme, to be considered for drought relief, one first had to meet the approval mechanisms of exceptional circumstances, including being within certain boundaries. Unfortunately, Mother Nature is not that precise when she drops her rainfall. She will drop rain anywhere that she feels is appropriate. Historically, we had circumstances where a farmer
in a drought declared area had successfully had three crops in a row while their next-door neighbour, not in a drought declared area, had suffered horrendous drought conditions. In this drought package we make sure that we catch those people and they are not left behind as a consequence of the drought. We assess applications on a needs basis, irrespective of whether or not someone falls within a defined area. That will make an enormous difference to the welfare and livelihood of those affected severely by drought conditions.

In Queensland, that drought package will be administered by the QRAA, the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority. Each state will have its own state body to administer the funds. I commend the QRAA for what they have done to date in administering the package. I encourage states to constantly review the guidelines so that we do not have too many people falling through the cracks, not being able to qualify for assistance because they do not meet the requirements in paragraph 3(a) on page 52. The guidelines must be constantly amended so that we do not leave people behind, we preserve their livelihoods and we preserve, in many cases, many generations of investment.

I would like to talk about the economy that we inherited and, in particular, remind the Australian public and the people of Wright that Labor inherited a $20 billion cash surplus but left a deficit of no less than $30 billion. In addition to that, an enormous amount of money, roughly $8 billion, was—and I will use the word lightly—raped from the Reserve Bank. Those cash reserves from the Reserve Bank need to be replenished. Labor turned nearly $50 billion in the bank into net debt well over $200 billion. The mind boggles as to how quickly that happened. In fact, I think it was the fastest deterioration of debt in dollar terms and as share of GDP in modern Australian history. That is quite a feat. A professor out of Harvard University—previously an economist with the IMF, the International Monetary Fund—Professor Ken Rogoff, wrote a report some time back, in which he stated that Australia's debt was the fastest-growing debt in the OECD. Labor's debt is already costing $10 billion a year in net interest payments. I will break that down, because it is so easy for a million or a billion to roll off the tongue, and it is hard for anyone to comprehend that amount of money. If you work it back to a fiscal basis, it works out to just under $500,000 every hour. So, in the time it takes for a few speakers to speak here tonight, we will have racked up another half a million dollars worth of interest on our debt bill. The fastest-rising, single line item on the balance sheet of Labor's budget was interest. That is a remarkable achievement. As a consequence, it is the future generations of this nation, the future generations of my electorate, who will be burdened with that debt.

Under Labor, the jobless queue grew by over 200,000 compared with a decline of approximately 250 under the former Howard government. Those on the other side of the House say that during their term of government they raised a million jobs. They forget to mention the jobs that were lost. A million jobs were created during their term—that figure is accurate—but jobs growth was zero in 2011. That means that for every job created, another job was lost. You will hear the Australian Labor Party say in this House that, since the Abbott government has been in power, one job has been lost every four minutes. The way they calculated that number is the reason they are not in government anymore—they have trouble with numbers. That is not the jobs lost to date; it is the forecast job losses into the future, as far out as 2017. The other side of this House will say that those are the jobs lost to date.
Again, those sorts of calculations and their inability with numbers are why the Labor side of the House has the lowest representation in the federal parliament since Federation. To put that into perspective for those who will read the Hansard or are listening, this chamber is horseshoe shaped and Labor fill just the first section of chairs on their side. It has been many years since that has been the case. But that is one of the great things about democracy—ultimately, the Australian people hold the power and they said overwhelmingly that they had had enough of the mismanagement, the abuse of power and the relationships between Labor and the union movement. They voiced their opinions and voted at the last election, and the Australian people had their say.

Labor's legacy is 200,000 more unemployed and a gross debt that is projected to be $667 billion. When you look at Labor's forecast in MYEFO, work out their accumulated deficits into the future and add up what their expenditure was going to be, you will find it would be no less than $667 billion, with $123 billion in accumulated deficits. What one could do with $123 billion—the mind boggles. They also had oversight of more than 50,000 illegal boat arrivals and the world's biggest carbon tax.

In the time remaining, I want to turn to the illegal boat arrivals. We saw the clips on the television when the former Labor government wound back the Pacific solution. When that bill passed, we saw them high-fiving and cheering. At that time, I think we had no less than four in detention.

Mr Irons interjecting—

Mr BUCHHOLZ: That is right, member for Swan, they were kissing and hugging in the chamber because they had won the vote to wind back the Pacific solution. But there was no high-fiving and rejoicing every time a life was lost at sea. There was none of that, because they knew quite well that they were pandering to the factionalism within the ALP—factionalism, something one could do a master's degree on and still not completely understand how the personalities revolve around each other.

On asylum seekers, in the last 70-odd days there has not been one boat arrival in Australian waters. That is because we made an election commitment that we were going to make a difference on illegal boat arrivals and turn the economy around—turn domestic confidence around and turn the deficit to surplus. We are so lucky that the Australian economy is resilient. I have some stats here that I will quickly run through. The resilience of this nation will allow us to, hopefully, bring the government to fiscal credibility.

From an economic perspective, Australia is ranked No. 1 in terms of the high proportion of the population with net worth above US$100,000. Australia has the world's 12th highest GDP and fifth highest GDP per capita. Australia has the third largest pool of investment funds under management. Australia is ranked third for economic freedom—and that is from the Index of Economic Freedom. Australia is ranked fourth for the number of new businesses in the world. Australia is ranked fifth on the financial development index. The Australian dollar is the fifth most traded currency—having such a small economy and only 22 million people that is a bizarre statistic; I suspect that is due to the strength of the Australian economy. The Australian Stock Exchange is the world's 10th largest by market capitalisation. With reference to trade, Australia is the No. 1 global exporter of coal, iron ore, aluminium ores and zinc. Australia is the No. 1 global exporter of beef and chick peas. Australia is the No. 2 global exporter of lentils and sugar. Australia is the fourth largest exporter of LNG as of 2012.
Australia is the sixth largest exporter of gold as of 2012 and it is the seventh largest exporter of silver.

With reference to education, Australia has the fourth highest number of international students, after the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France. Australia is ranked fifth in the number of universities in the world's top 100.

Australia ranks No. 2 on the UN's Human Development Index after Norway. Australia has the fifth highest life expectancy—the source of that, as of 2011, was the World Bank. Australia has the eighth highest international tourism spend from overseas visitors.

While I come to this place to share the poor record of Labor, I can say that as a nation we are truly resilient. The people in my electorate, Wright—who have seen flood, drought and the high Australian dollar, which has had an enormous impact on their exports—are truly resilient. Under the coalition government, we will return this country and this economy to surplus in the future. We will do it because we are disciplined. We have shown that discipline to be accurate and right when it comes to border security. We will continue that same discipline in the fiscal and economic sectors, in conjunction with our small business partners. Small- and medium-sized enterprises, corporates, mums and dads—everyone who puts their shoulder to the wheel will do so knowing that a coalition government in this country will make a difference.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (20:08): I rise to contribute to this debate on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014. It is always good to follow the member for Wright. Like me—and I see the member for Forde in the chamber as well—the member for Wright ran a business prior to coming to this place. We, along with the coalition, understand about fiscal responsibility and making sure that the bills are paid based on what is coming in the door as well as what is going out of the door, something the previous government failed to recognise in their six years. I note that these are the first appropriation bills of the Abbott government and I am encouraged by the tone that these bills set for the coalition government.

The bills include measures in four specific areas—economic management, foreign affairs, immigration and border protection, and defence. These bills take positive steps towards providing sound financial management with respect to the Reserve Bank of Australia, good organisational management with the streamlining of the Public Service, strong border protection with a plan to stop the boats and a focus and priority on defence. This is a far cry from the priorities and policies of the former Labor government, whose appropriation bills were littered with profligate and wasteful spending.

We all remember the carbon tax kitchen, the study on ergonomic designs of desk chairs and the set-top box rip-offs under the previous government—not to mention the pink batts. Page after page of the budget papers were full of these wasteful items of expenditure which added up to the biggest deficits in Australia's history. The most frustrating part for the coalition and for the Australian people is that the Labor Party still just do not get it when it comes to budget and waste. They do not understand how wasteful spending is directly related to budget deficits.

I recall, during the recent debate on the Tax Bonus for Working Australians Repeal Bill 2013, the member for Fraser stating that he just could not understand why the government
was going to the trouble of repealing legislation to save only $250,000. The member for Fraser said 'only $250,000'. It is this frame of mind, this mode of thinking from the Labor Party, that created the financial disaster of the last government. I am sure there are other members in this place who know that most of the people in their electorate would think that $250,000 is a damn lot of money and would love to have that sort of money fall into their letterbox. To the member for Fraser and to all members opposite I say that eliminating $250,000 of waste is a good start, and I can assure members opposite that it will be only the start of this government's effort in the massive task that lies ahead of restoring the budget and the financial position of this country.

With the serious financial position the country was left in just a few short months ago by Labor, it is difficult to even imagine that just a year or two ago Treasurer Swan was suggesting that there was going to be a surplus in the 2012-13 financial year. I remember being in the House on budget night on 8 May 2012. I remember the disbelief of members on our side of the House when the Treasurer claimed that he had delivered the surplus 'as promised', when there was nothing in his speech to indicate the structural repair to the budget necessary for a surplus. But the Treasurer's plan was not for a real surplus; it was a plan for a paper surplus, a one-off surplus before the election to parade before the voters. That was the Treasurer's plan. I cannot remember how many times he promised he was going to deliver a surplus but I wish I had a dollar for every time he promised it.

Mr Van Manen: It was over 500.

Mr IRONS: The member for Forde says it was over 500 times.

Dr Chalmers: He is being helpful!

Mr IRONS: I acknowledge the member for Rankin saying that members on this side are being helpful about this serious issue. The Treasurer had a series of paper-shuffling exercises to bring spending out of and revenue into the 2012-13 financial year. It was a fraud on the voters, but ultimately a fraud that did not succeed. To the credit of the then shadow Treasurer Hockey, he called it instantly when he said that the Labor government would never deliver a surplus. He was of course emphatically correct, but he had a lot of history to follow because Labor had not delivered a surplus since 1989.

The short-term economic mismanagement by the former Treasurer has had long-term consequences, which the coalition is today dealing with in these bills. As part of an attempt to get the artificial surplus in 2012-13, the Labor government raided the Reserve Bank fund to the tune of $500 million. The Treasurer had already taken out $5.23 billion in one year alone, 2009-10, so there was not much more to take out; but still he proceeded in depleting the Reserve Bank's reserves to unacceptable levels. Following the $5.2 billion raid the then Treasurer, Mr Swan, gave his in-principle agreement to a concerned RBA that all future profits be paid into its reserve fund until it reached its targeted level, before any further dividends were paid to the Commonwealth. But then, in August 2012, against the advice of the Reserve Bank and counter to his commitment, Treasurer Swan determined that nearly 50 per cent of the bank's total earnings in 2011-12—$500 million—would be credited to the Commonwealth as a dividend. We know that the Reserve Bank was not happy about that. We know this because in an article on the ABC website—and I do not like to quote the ABC but will on this—dated 25 October 2013 and entitled 'Ex-Reserve Bank board member Warwick McKibbin accuses Wayne Swan of economic vandalism', Mr McKibbin is quoted as saying:
Because when I was on the board 2011—I finished July 2011—we made a very large loss because of the very high Australian dollar. The following year after I'd left, there was a small profit of over $1 billion. The treasurer was requested not to extract that from the balance sheet of the bank. He ignored that request and took $500 million so that he could reach the budget surplus in 2012-13. That to me is economic vandalism. It wasn't that he may not have been asked to put more money in, but he was certainly asked not to take money out.

The Reserve Bank needs a significant reserve. Reserves are required as an insurance policy—providing capacity to mitigate the effects of adverse economic and financial stocks, for example, by intervening in the foreign exchange market. And it is this fact in particular which starkly exposes the Treasurer who spoke so much about the global financial crisis. Day after day he congratulated himself in this place on dealing with it, but in actual fact his actions weakened the capacity of not only the national government but the Reserve Bank to respond to a financial crisis. Holding significant reserves is important for implementing the RBA's monetary policy decisions and for managing the day-to-day foreign currency requirements of the Australian government; it is important in domestic liquidity management operations. Glenn Stevens and the board have nominated 15 per cent of the asset at risk as the appropriate level of the reserve fund and we support that.

Our institutions must be at their absolute strongest to deal with the challenges in the days, weeks and months ahead, and the coalition government will not allow our institutions to be in any way weakened.

The bill also provides just over $2.5 billion for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as a means of re-appropriating amounts previously provided to the former AusAID agency that are required this financial year for expenditure by DFAT. This relates to a decision of the coalition government to integrate AusAID with DFAT in order to achieve a better alignment of Australia's foreign, trade and aid policies and programs. The coalition government, with its focus on eliminating any waste and duplication in the public service, has taken a number of decisions relating to departmental restructure since being elected in September. A number of superfluous groups have been discontinued and departmental structures simplified and centralised. In this spirit, AusAID has been brought into the Department of Foreign Affairs under the supervision of the honourable Minister Julie Bishop MP. The government recognises that an effective and high quality aid program is fundamental to advancing Australia's national interests and integration will ensure that the aid program promotes Australia's interests through contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction. The aid program's geographic priority will be the Indo-Pacific region and it is indeed a welcome development to have a bit of a focus on results back in the foreign affairs portfolio. After years of haphazard funding at great public expense in pursuit of votes to fulfil Kevin Rudd's dream of a temporary place on the Security Council, we finally have a focused foreign aid program more clearly in the interests of the region and in our own national interest. As the foreign minister said on 14 February at the opening address of the 2014 Australasian Aid and International Development Policy workshop:

It is in Australia's national interest for there to be peace and prosperity in our region—it is part of our national interest. So that is why we are consolidating our efforts on our neighbourhood—the Indian Ocean Asia Pacific—where we can make the biggest difference. This is where we have a responsibility to foster peace and prosperity.

I note from reading the full transcript of this address that there may still be a hangover in the media from the Kevin Rudd era of largesse. The foreign minister said:
Now I know from a report on the ABC last night that apparently my priorities are wrong because I am not funding the reconstruction of the Grenada Parliament House in the Caribbean. According to the ABC I have got my priorities wrong. The previous government, in order to buy the vote of the Grenadian Government for the Security Council seat and believe me I support us being on the Security Council, promised to rebuild their Parliament House—committed $3.5 million to do it, a million dollars has already gone. The Grenadian Government actually campaigned at the last election on the basis that they would not put a dollar into the building of their parliament house because the Australian Government and others would do it.

I think that says it all with respect to the previous government's attitude to foreign aid. Given Grenada is among the high human development countries in the world, we might be better directing our aid at our region. Papua New Guinea, for example, is number 156 on the HDI rankings. Grenada's parliament house will not be a focus of our aid money.

I am sure that this government's more focused approach will also please those in my electorate of Swan with a particular interest in this topic. This includes the congregation of Star Street Uniting Church in Carlisle who wrote to me on foreign aid. I was pleased to be able to invite members of the congregation for a meeting at my office on 18 February. The Reverend Gordon Scantlebury ably spoke about the passion of his congregation on this matter and I was pleased to be able to update him on the coalition's priorities. I thank the Reverend for taking the time to attend the office.

I support the measures related to AusAID in this bill. The bills also include just over $1.1 billion for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, particularly including amounts for offshore asylum seeker processing. On this subject the will of the people could not be clearer. The government was elected on a clear mandate to implement Operation Sovereign Borders and stop the boats. The people of Australia could not have been clearer, at the election, that they supported the government's policies to stop the boats. The government is stopping the boats and ending the drownings at sea. Over 1,000 deaths at sea—that we know about—occurred after the previous government dismantled the Howard government's proven border protection measures. It has been said that this is the most deaths resulting from a government policy since World War II. And the minister for immigration, through the measures included in Operation Sovereign Borders, has stopped the drownings and restored order to our borders so that genuine refugees can be taken in future from the refugee camps around the world. Yet the response of the opposition is to castigate the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and to accuse Lieutenant General Angus Campbell of a political cover-up in the Senate through the opposition Defence spokesman, Steven Conroy—quite disgraceful. I support the appropriations measures on border protection in these bills, which will continue to allow the minister to deliver on the coalition's election commitment to stop the boats.

The fourth element of these bills is just over $540 million for the Department of Defence for overseas operations, to supplement foreign exchange movements and for the re-appropriation of amounts between the appropriation acts aligning with Defence's current work programs. I note Defence's no win, no loss arrangement with the government on foreign exchange fluctuations. I also note the budget measures and other budget adjustments for the Defence portfolio from the additional estimates statement and the importance of activities in relation to Operation Sovereign Borders and Operation Slipper.
In the short time I have left I note that the Minister for Defence is a minister for Western Australia. His office is in my electorate and he, along with our other Senate team, will be facing the electors on 5 April. The member for Forrest and I will be along, supporting our senators, and will have them re-elected back into this place to help implement the government's policies and promises we made at the last election. I commend the bills to the House.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (20:24): There is an enduring theme in the speeches from this side of the House, and that is basically around the Rudd and Gillard governments' legacy of debt and deficit. That is something that nobody can get away from. It does not matter which way you spin it or which way you twist it or turn it; we have seen a series of budget mismanagements and budget deficits and what unfortunately has become intergenerational fiscal debt. We are told that gross debt will peak at over $667 billion thanks to the $123 billion in accumulated deficits. We have seen a projected deficit ahead of us of $47 billion.

The one thing that the Labor Party could not achieve in government was that very elusive budget surplus. They talked about it but they never actually delivered it. They claimed they delivered it, but they never did.

Mr McCormack: They said 2016-17.

Ms MARINO: That is exactly right. In addition to that, the one thing with all of these figures that hit me over and over again was that the Labor Party when in government provided absolutely no credible path back to surplus at all. It was just on a wing and a prayer and a maybe: 'We will put it out in a pamphlet but it won't actually happen.' This is the legacy of the Gillard and Rudd Labor governments, and no amount of spin, no matter who is telling the story, can or will erase the impact of that debt legacy on future generations of Australians.

I will touch on one of the early effective policies—that is, of course, Operation Sovereign Borders. We know that the measures put in place by this government have seen a complete change in the people smugglers' business model. I am sure this was something they had hoped would not happen, but it has; and that has resulted in, as we know, at least 70 days of no arrivals. But I think to the people in this place, as we have heard previously, the most important thing is that there are no more deaths at sea. That is one of the biggest issues in this debate. I, like my colleagues before me, thought the comments by Senator Conroy, the shadow minister, to Lieutenant General Angus Campbell were absolutely disgraceful. There is no other way to describe that than 'disgraceful'.

There has been a lot said about the carbon tax. I would have to say that for the last six years my electorate of Forrest was very poorly served by the Labor government. There is no better example of this than what I call the absolute blight of Labor's carbon tax. I have energy generators in my electorate—Muja Power Station, Collie, Bluewaters 1 and 2.

I think this will be something very relevant to people in Western Australia heading to the next election, because the carbon tax, along with the mining tax, was really a Western Australian tax. Of the 20 carbon tax bills in Australia, 16 have been sent to electricity companies. Electricity is being hit with a carbon tax of $4.1 billion. That is passed on to households and to small businesses through their electricity bills. That is happening around
Australia; but in Western Australia electricity generation was a $200 million work bill. The Bluewaters power stations in my electorate were billed $60 million.

We know that manufacturing and the mining have been hit with a bill of at least $1.1 billion; mining oil and gas, $980 million. Why would you make a bad situation worse? That is exactly what the Labor government did. For some reason they thought that business would be able to function under this increasing weight. And it was going to keep going up. That is what people have forgotten in this debate: that carbon tax was going to continue to increase. Of the top 50 carbon tax bills sent to WA businesses: LNG at Woodside, $172 million; BHP Billiton Worsley Alumina, in my electorate, $56 million. And we know about fertiliser at the Yara Pilbara plant up north at $35 million. They are just examples.

The one thing that we know is that none of our competitors are facing the same economy-wide carbon tax as those in Australia are. We know that the cost to the state government in Western Australia would be around $50 million. For some reason, the Labor Party when in government thought that these were just throwaway lines. But they are very real and they are very costly. They have affected every person—every individual—and every business and every industry in my electorate.

The other part of this carbon tax that completely floored me, when I looked through Labor's papers, was the proposed hit to diesel fuel. We know that this was going to be Labor's transport tax, a tax on trucks. As someone from the transport industry I took it personally. We could see how this was going to be applied. It was around 7c a litre. The extraordinary thing about it was there was no recognition that this was going to disproportionately hit states like Western Australia, anybody else who lived in a rural or regional community and anybody in business in any way, shape or form. It would hit virtually everything that is delivered to a business or a farm throughout our states. And it is a vast continent. That is why there would be a disproportionate impact—because this extra 7c a litre was going to be on diesel. I can see the member for Riverina looking at me because he understands the disproportionate effect this would have on rural and regional Australia—a tax on trucks. Just about everything that is delivered in this country, whether or not the members opposite like to admit it, comes on the back of a truck. But they were saying: 'We're going to tax it just to get to you. We'll just put up the cost of you doing business.'

One of the other things we said we were going to do was restore the Australian Building and Construction Commission. I was one of those who did some work on this in the run up to the election, and we are certainly due for this. I heard, earlier, one of my colleagues mention that Martin Ferguson might be one of the most quoted persons in this House. I agree, because I am about to do the same thing. Mr Ferguson said:

… it is time that some in today's union leadership recognised that their members' long-term interests are aligned with their long term job security.

And he supported our proposal to return the Australian Building and Construction Commission.

I want to touch on one other issue that I worked particularly hard on, and that is cybersafety. The internet is one of the most fabulous tools; but, as it expands and develops faster and faster speeds and greater reach, unfortunately, the risks are also increasing. That is why I spend a lot of my time educating Australians, particularly young Australians, on how to protect themselves and even their families, on what to be aware of when they are online. Why
is this an issue? Because, according to Telstra, Australian kids aged between 10 and 17 are online for an average of two hours a day—amongst the highest internet usage rates in the world. I would say, from my experience out in my electorate, that that is a very conservative figure. When I ask young kids, ‘When you go home after school, how much time do you get to spend on the internet,’ sometimes it is half an hour, sometimes it is two hours, sometimes it is unlimited. When I say to them, ‘What about the weekend,’ it is, ‘As much as I like.’ But the thing that scares me most as a parent and as a member of the community is that, all too frequently, I meet young people who admit to me that they have gone and met in person somebody they had only met online. I hope that is a real wake-up call to every person in this House, every person who is listening and even to young people themselves. They have no idea who they are talking to online or what that person wants from them. I want them to enjoy what they do online. I want them to be able to access the right information and enjoy what they do online. I want them to be able to access the right information and enjoy what they do, whether it is music—whatever interaction they are having. But they do need to be smart, they need to stay safe and they need to be incredibly responsible when they are online. I want to see this education continue.

I am also particularly pleased about our approach to cyberbullying. One of the things I am really keen to explore further is a simple, practical definition of cyberbullying as an offence that can be used at a local level, because I have dealt with our local police on these sorts of matters and because a mother rang me up to say that her 11-year-old daughter came home after listening to one of my presentations and said, ‘Mum, I realise now, after listening to Mrs Marino, that I am being groomed online.’ Now, this is happening so much of the time. These are not isolated incidents that I am coming across, and their prevalence disturbs me greatly. And it is not as though our young people are accessing the internet only at home; it is everywhere. They can go to an internet cafe, they can go to some fast-food outlets—there is free access—and of course at the houses of friends, family and everyone else.

These young people need to know how to protect themselves, but I believe that these great young people are a major part of the answer. When I ask them in my presentations, ‘Do you think you know more than your parents about being online, about the internet,’ they say yes. If I ask them if they know more than their grandparents, of course their answer is yes there as well. When I ask them if they think they know more than their younger brothers and sisters at this moment, of course they say yes again. And they are right, because this is their world, this is their space and they do know more than most of us. That is why we need them to help educate the rest of us. But we also need them to be smart about what they do online, and one of the key messages I give them is that they should never, ever, not under any circumstances, agree to meet in person someone that they have only met online.

There is another area of pressure for our young people online, and I am really concerned about this. I was talking to the principal of a high school in my electorate recently, and he said that it was not just the academic, practical and VET accomplishments of his students that consumed his time and thoughts; his biggest concern was their mental health, and a lot of that revolved around what they do in the social media space and the impact that has on their lives.

When I talk to young people they say to me that they often have access to their devices 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When it is that young person who is going through a bad time, that is the time when they are going to bullied—and it is 24 hours a day, seven days a
week. It is relentless and these young people do not know how to handle it. And it is not just young people; adults can have the same experience.

I get out as often as I can and I talk to as many people as I can—young people, businesses, community groups, parents; whomever I can get to—and I encourage them to learn as much as they can about what they do online and to apply the same safety measures to themselves as they should apply to their children. I encourage them to be involved with their children online. Their children actually say to me that often they cannot talk to mum and dad about what is going on online because they are worried that mum and dad will take away the device, take away their access or ground them—or do a combination of all three. So often they will not talk to their parents. But they do need to talk to someone, and that needs to be a teacher or a responsible adult.

We should not brush this off and take it lightly. As I said, this is 24 hours a day, seven days a week for these great young people. It is a very difficult issue for them to deal with and they do need good people like ourselves around them to help and support them during this time, even if they have to perhaps talk to someone in their school—a school chaplain or a school counsellor or even their teacher and their principal. I know that some young people have been encouraged into using a range of different photo-sharing sites, and I am really concerned about the types of photos that are online that these young people know will be there basically forever. (Time expired)

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (20:39): I pay tribute to the member for Forrest. She has been passionate about this issue of online safety, particularly for children. It has been a cause which she has been promoting to members and senators throughout this place. It is obviously something that is paying dividends now in the community. I note that the government is also responding to concerns that the member has been raising for quite some time in this place. So I do pay tribute to her. It is an important issue—one that is probably not so headline grabbing unless something terrible happens but one that we all need to be mindful of in this digital era.

Today I rise to speak on the appropriation bills that are before us. The appropriation bills, in layman's terms, are the updates to the nation's finances—the budget and the chops and changes that we have had to that budget. What I intend to do is give a bit of an appraisal from my point of view as the member for Dawson of how we are travelling as a nation economically. I have to say that one thing that is quite clear is that the situation we now have is absolutely astonishing, given that we have been through what should have been almost a golden era economically for Australia, where we have had the resources boom in full flight, great prices for our commodities and mining companies booming throughout the Bowen Basin and throughout your electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, and over in Western Australia it has been powering on. The previous government talk of how they saved this nation from the GFC. Well, they did not. The reality is that there were only two sectors that were pulling the nation ahead, and it certainly was not the government. It was resources and it was agriculture. That is what kept this nation afloat throughout the GFC, combined with the fact that there was actually money in the cupboard—a surplus that the previous government had left; money in the bank—that could be spent in that time of need. The reality is that it was the resources sector and the agricultural sector that pulled us through the GFC.
I think of all of that economic activity—probably the greatest there has been in this nation, particularly in the resources sector. And what do we have now to show for it? We are careering head first into $667 billion worth of debt. That is a staggering figure—six hundred and sixty-seven thousand million dollars worth of debt that is saddled on the taxpayers of this nation and saddled on the government. This is a debt that is going to accrue interest—a debt that we are going to reach unless we turn around the good ship of Australia and set it on the right course. That was indeed what this government was elected to do. The Liberal and National coalition was elected to clean up the mess that we had been left from the Rudd-Gillard and Rudd again governments—a mess that almost brought the nation to its knees.

One of my political heroes is the late and great US President Ronald Reagan. I am going to paraphrase him. He could have been speaking specifically about Labor governments but he did not; he just said 'government's'. But I am going to say 'Labor's' just to help the quote. Labor's:

… view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it.

What an apt description for the last six years of Labor government that we saw in this country. If it moved it was taxed. The mining industry was powering ahead and creating jobs right throughout Central and North Queensland and regional Queensland—and in your electorate as well, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott—and creating jobs in Western Australia. It was an industry that was moving and the government saw it and said, 'Here is where we can get some money from,' and brought in a mining tax. They brought in a mining tax that collected nothing from the big players, I have to say—or just about next to nothing—but certainly hampered investment from new miners, which is why we have seen this dry-up of investment in the resources sector.

Then they brought in a carbon tax, which again hit so many mines out there. Mines that have fugitive gas emissions were all hit under the carbon tax for millions and millions of dollars. In fact, one mine alone in Central Queensland reported a $12 million hit from the carbon tax. At a time when prices contracted, this was devastating. The international price of coal fell and that was devastating for those mines. We have seen lay-offs not just of direct workers at the mines but also in the mining service companies that sprang up in what should have been this golden era, which have been contracting very heavily. I have seen estimates put out by organisations such as the Queensland Resources Council that job losses throughout the Bowen Basin are probably upwards of 11,000. In fact, I recently saw one estimate of over 15,000. Those are the direct jobs. The flow-on through mining service companies has been even greater and has been felt in towns such as Mackay and throughout the Dawson electorate. So that was clearly an example of, 'If it moves, tax it.' They did, and they just about killed it.

This government is going to restore confidence in the mining sector, but we can only do that if the opposition accepts the fact that this government has a mandate. We have a mandate to get rid of the mining tax, to get rid of the carbon tax, to implement the minerals exploration tax credit and to re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission. These are four key policies. If we were able to get on with the job and do what we said we were going to do in the election, and if Labor got out of the way and just let us do it by instructing their
senators to pass this legislation and accept the will of the Australian people, then we would be able to get mining back on the road again.

Ronald Reagan also said that, if it kept moving, you had to regulate it, and we certainly saw that under the last government. We have seen the chaos that has ensued from the obviously ham-fisted handling of the national transport regulations, which has brought the whole heavy vehicle industry to a grinding halt. It is symptomatic of the kind of ill-thought-through projects, proposals and regulations that we saw under the previous government.

In my electorate there was one major project that we wanted to get signed off months and months ago, and that was the Abbot Point coal terminal expansion. I had a town there—I still have a town there, but only just—by the name of Bowen. Bowen is on its knees. It has suffered job losses and business closures, all because of a lack of confidence and a belief that the government of the day, the previous Labor government, were not going to approve the Abbot Point coal terminal expansion and would acquiesce to their mates the Greens, who they were in government with. It sapped the lifeblood out of that town. It is only starting to come back now, since the current environment minister has finally approved that job-creating project, despite all the hoo-ha that has come out of the green movement on it and all the lies—and they have been lies, I have to say—that have been told about this project.

I found it very interesting that on that front the previous government would not say whether they would approve it or not—they kept the people waiting—but in fact the Labor candidate that ran against me at the last election told the people of Bowen that she supported it and would make sure that that approval happened. Well, the approval happened under this government, and what did the former Labor environment minister have to say about it? He said it was a bad thing and would probably harm the reef. So we know what Labor would have done for the town of Bowen and that project: they would have caved in once again to their Green mates, killed jobs and destroyed opportunity in a town which, as I said, is currently on its knees. There are so many other examples of this sort of rot that has gone on, impacting upon the development of North Queensland and the livelihoods of my constituents.

Ronald Reagan had another quote, and I am going to paraphrase that: if the federal government had been around when the Creator was putting his hand to things, Queensland would not be here; it would still be awaiting an EPBC approval. That was pretty much the reality under the previous government. But we are getting on with the job. We have approved so many major projects under this government. We are streamlining things. Environmental regulation is now going to be a one-stop shop: the state governments will be handling it. Why do we need two separate processes? Why do we need two years to go through a state environmental check and then two years to go through a federal environmental check? Why can't it be done more quickly, as South Australia can do? They have approved the biggest resource project in this country, I understand, and they did it in a bit over six months. If it can be done that quickly by a state government, why can't it all be done in a streamlined fashion and in that time frame? If we can do that, we will restore confidence not just to the resources sector but to the entire investment community out there. If they can see that these processes are going to happen quickly, we can get investment into projects and we can get jobs created. But again we need support from the opposition. We need them to recognise the fact that this government has a mandate to do that sort of stuff.
The final thing that Reagan said was that if it stopped moving then you subsidise it. We have unfortunately seen the results of a lot of the previous Labor government's policies come to a head. Unfortunately, in the few short months that we have been in government, we have seen major companies like Holden and Toyota announce that they are going. We have had requests for help from companies like SPC Ardmona and now Qantas that have been struggling under the weight of such policies as the carbon tax. This government is obviously considering every single cry for help and trying to do what it can within its means, but what do we hear instead of something well thought through from the other side? They just yell out: 'Throw money at it! Save it! Subsidise it!' Well, how big a cheque are they willing to write? How much taxpayers' money are they willing to throw at corporate welfare?

That is the problem with the Labor Party. They do not recognise that this nation is careering to $667 billion worth of debt, they just think that there is an endless bucket of money, Magic Pudding economics, and we can just write another cheque and hand it to another company to keep them going. That is not how things are going to work under this government. There will be new jobs created, there will be government investment in the regions, particularly in my region through the $6.7 billion that we are putting into the Bruce Highway to get that up to speed and projects such as the Mackay ring road that will go ahead.

These are things we are going to be doing that will directly create jobs but it is going to be real investment, not the fake sort of investment and dodgy schemes we saw under the previous government such as the school hall program. It is great there have been some results achieved there, but I went to one of the local schools in my area and the principal pointed out, 'This is the building we bought with P&C funds over here a couple of years ago. Here is the BER project.' I said, 'How much was that one?' She said: 'It was worth half the price of this one. That building over there, done by the P&C, was twice the size.' So there was your value for money under the BER. We had dodgy projects such as the pink batts scheme and the foil insulation scheme. I have a local constituent report to me that one of these pink batt salesmen came up and checked his roof and said: 'Yep, mate, we'll sort it out for you. We'll lay it all out.' He got a bit suspicious and crawled up in his roof to have a look and he already had the foil in there. It was already there. This is a kind of rot that went on and this is a kind of rot that needs to stop. That is what we are doing: stopping the rot, fixing the problems and getting on with the job of good government. Only if the opposition will join us can we actually implement these reforms we want to implement. They need to get rid of the carbon tax, get rid of the mining tax, help us implement the mandate we were elected to implement. (Time expired)

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (20:54): I am very pleased to rise to speak on these appropriation bills. In the time available to me I would like to speak about important public policy considerations regarding value for money and sound public administration when it comes to the area of broadband and communications. This is an area where truth and honesty are enormously important. Unfortunately and regrettably for the people of Australia, it is an area which for most of the last six years has been in the hands of the former minister for broadband, Senator Conroy. It was a richly ironic spectacle to see that same man last week while asking questions in the estimates process in another place slam the table and say, 'Can't you handle the truth?' That was the question asked by Senator Conroy. Those who have watched the inglorious
period in which he has had custody of broadband and communications policy in this nation would say to themselves, what a rich irony indeed that this man should be saying, 'Can't you handle the truth?'

Let us have a look at some of the more inglorious moments in the Conrovian approach to public policy, if I can appropriate for present purposes the adjective which the Minister for Communications has appropriately coined and which has become a byword for public policy incompetence. Let us look first at the Conrovian promise regarding the original fibre-to-the-node network when in March 2007 the then shadow communications minister promised to build a fixed broadband network using fibre to the node to deliver a speed of 12 megabits per second to 98 per cent of Australians. He promised it was going to cost a mere $4.7 billion of public money and it was going to be done in five years. What was the status five years later, five years after that March 2007 promise? By March 2012, far from reaching 98 per cent, Labor’s broadband policy had delivered fixed broadband services to less than one-tenth of one per cent of the targeted 10 million premises. In fact, its fibre network had a mere 2,315 services in operation, five years after that Conrovian promise of March 2007.

One of the more extraordinary Conrovian claims is to be found in a speech made by the then shadow minister in September 2007 in the Senate in which he said:

Labor’s carefully costed fibre to the node network is based on a detailed calculation of the number of nodes required to reach 98 per cent of Australians. This includes the number of upgrades of exchanges and pillars internodes that are required.

Anybody who has even a passing acquaintance with the inglorious history of this extraordinary public policy disaster will know that the claim that the then shadow minister had carefully costed his fibre-to-the-node policy is, on a charitable description, heroic. In fact, the true cost of this network was always going to be vastly higher than the $4.7 billion figure because the then shadow minister used a figure which was taken from a 2005 proposal made by Telstra that, for $4.7 billion of government money plus its own money, Telstra would upgrade its network to deliver 12 megabits per second to 98 per cent of premises.

But there are at least two crucial reasons why that figure was incorrectly, inaccurately and inappropriately used by the then shadow minister. Firstly, Telstra's figure was a request for a subsidy. There was certainly no intention on the part of Telstra that in exchange for the $4.7 billion government would get an ownership stake in the network, as the Labor policy in 2007 assumed. Secondly, the Telstra 2005 proposal did not involve fibre to the node to 98 per cent of premises; it involved a mix of existing and new networks and technologies which would have been very materially less expensive than the Conrovian model of fibre to the node to 98 per cent of premises.

The flaws and inaccuracies in the Conrovian model were revealed once he tried to implement it. His intended private sector partner was Telstra but Telstra refused to participate in the plan, and so in April 2009 the then minister by this time abandoned his first plan and announced his second, now to be a fibre-to-the-premises network to 90 per cent of premises with wireless and satellite to the rest, and the cost would be $43 billion. So let us assess what he promised in March 2007 and what he delivered. He promised the new network would be substantially private-sector funded with public funding capped at $4.7 billion. In fact—

Debate interrupted.
ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (21:00): It being nine o'clock, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Family Law

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (21:00): Many reckless pieces of legislation were brought before this place under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd Labor-Greens alliance, but perhaps none were more reckless or more damaging to Australian families than their Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Bill 2011. That law redefined family violence to mean just about anything, and encouraged vindictive parents to make fraudulent claims to remove other parents from families. The Labor minister at the time claimed that no-one would make such false claims. Yet in a submission to the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry relating to the 2011 bill, Professor Patrick Parkinson from the University of Sydney referenced a paper called ‘Domestic Violence: Views of Queensland Magistrates’ when he said:

A … survey of 38 Queensland magistrates found that 74% agreed with the proposition that protection orders are used in Family Court proceedings as a tactic to aid a parent’s case and to deprive their partner of contact with their children.

Fast forward a year after the law came into effect, and we have this article from The Sydney Morning Herald of 6 July 2013, the headline of which said it all: ‘False … claims are the new court weapon, retiring judge says’. Justice David Collier was retiring from the Parramatta Family Court after 14 years on the bench and spoke about mothers who, he said, directed false allegations of abuse against former partners. He said:

When you have heard the evidence, you realise that this is a person who's so determined to win that he or she will say anything. I'm satisfied that a number of people who have appeared before me have known that it is one of the ways of completely shutting husbands out of the child's life.

It's a horrible weapon.

The consequences of such allegations can be extreme. A former colleague of mine and of others in this place, the former member for Hume, Alby Schultz, spoke with some of the victims of family law who were treated most unfairly and, unable to see light at the end of the tunnel, ended up taking their own lives. In his retirement speech, Alby had this to say:

… in 2005 I produced a booklet based on three years of hard research about the Child Support Agency and its relentless, unjustifiable anti-male culture, which culminated in the suicide of a number of my young constituents. Confronting the very serious issue of male suicide caused by the gender biased CSA was treated as a politically sensitive no-go area by many politicians, which I embraced as a challenge on behalf of 4,000 families and individuals across the country.

Like the member for Hume, I too have had my share of constituents who feel they have reached the end of their tether. One example is a constituent whose ex-partner moved from their mining town home to the coast. When he followed so he could continue to spend time with his son, he could no longer find a job that paid as well as one of those mining jobs out west. But the CSA deemed that he was 'capable' of earning the much higher wage, so they forced him to make child support payments as if he was actually receiving that income. That situation was just not sustainable for him, so he had no choice but to move back to the remote
west, giving up access to his son, so he could pay exorbitant amounts of money to keep his ex-partner in luxury on the coast. The CSA, through its actions, denied this father his right to have meaningful access to his child and, through its actions, denied the child its right to a meaningful relationship with its father.

In another example, a Mackay man had court orders in place that specifically precluded his ex-partner from moving to another town. In breach of those court orders, his ex-partner moved to an undisclosed location in another town, depriving him of his right to see his children. To rub salt into that wound, his ex-partner then requested a change of assessment from the CSA because, in their view, the ex-partner was no longer looking after his children. Despite knowing that the ex-partner was in breach of court orders and that the father's care time had been reduced against his will, the CSA still increased the amount of child support he had to pay to his ex-partner.

Family law and child support is a very messy area and there are no winners. But, under the current system, some of the losers are needlessly being turned into massive losers—even to the extent of losing their children, and their life. When constituents come to me with family law and child support issues, they almost always end their story with the phrase: 'How is that fair?' Well, it is not fair. The system is broken and the system needs to be fixed. It can be made fairer. We can do something to restore the balance in this area so that fathers can be fathers and that children can have a relationship with their fathers. There will never be winners in family law; there will never be winners in child support. But the least that we can do in this place is to make it fair for all parties.

**Werriwa Electorate: Macdermott, Sister Kerry**

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON** (Werriwa) (21:05): Tomorrow at the Holy Trinity Church in Minto in my electorate there will be a joyous recognition of a wonderful Australian. I speak of Brisbane-born Sister Kerry Macdermott who, for 30 years, has lived in the community of Werriwa, formerly in Minto and more recently in Macquarie Fields, both of which are fairly deprived areas. She actually saw Minto change very considerably with housing department redevelopment. In that time, Sister Macdermott has particularly emphasised a role with Indigenous Australians. She worked at a settlement near Uluru for a number of years, and still each year raises money to send back Christmas presents to the children in that locality. She also worked at Redfern with the legendary Mum Shirl and Father Ted Kennedy.

Her activities in the Werriwa electorate have included a central role in the establishment of the Winga Myamly Reconciliation Group. Each year she is the driving force in the memorial service for the Appin massacre of 1816, which of course is getting very close to its 200-year anniversary, when at least 14 Indigenous Australians were either shot or driven over cliffs—that is, at least, the number of bodies found; obviously, the numbers over the precipice would have added to that number. She is also a regular attendant at the Sorry Day service at Minto. She makes sure that a local Aboriginal art and craft market occurs. Typical of her interest in that policy area and in helping Indigenous Australians was the fact that she travelled with local Indigenous community residents down here to hear the historic apology by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

She has lived in the community as a member of the Catholic order of Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor, more commonly known as the 'Brown Sisters'. She lived for 30 of the 50-year celebration she will be having tomorrow with fellow sister Patricia Murphy. Typical of the
realities they faced in this deprived community was the first evening they arrived, in December 1984. Two bedraggled St Vincent de Paul workers came to them with a woman in her 30s who had nowhere to live that night. That first night, putting her up in their house, was the beginning of a reality of very strong commitment and connection to the community. There are many tales of people who were at the end of their tether. There was, for instance, a single parent with two children who, with the sisters’ help, are in now a situation where one child has started to own their own maintenance business and the other is just about to complete secondary schooling with a school based traineeship. This would not have occurred without the fact that the sisters lived in the area and that they contributed so much to the community.

Sister Kerry is also an accomplished poet. She is especially pleased that her work has been published in the Koori Mail on a number of occasions. This is a woman who is endlessly active. She has very pronounced organisational skills. The cooperation of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in these events is extremely encouraging. My area has a very prominent Indigenous health centre. It typifies a fairly high Indigenous population. As I say, it is people like her who really make you believe in humanity. She is little acknowledged—she is never going to get the Order of Australia—but is out there every day of the week working for Indigenous and poorer Australians. She has played a good role in regard to the questions of the housing redevelopment that is occurring throughout the electorate, most recently at Claymore. On moving to this electorate, I found that it was very traditional with my predecessor, Mr Chris Hayes, that she dropped into the office with a cake every month or so.

I am pleased to say that on this important day tomorrow, while I cannot be there, two of my staff, Linda Perrett and Vicki Meadows, who are very close to her, will be in attendance. I salute her effort. It is what Australia is made of. She has played a tremendous role for the 30 years she has been in our area, and before that, with Indigenous Australians.

Address-in-Reply

Mr IRONS (Swan) (21:10): I rise this evening to conclude my remarks on the address-in-reply to the Governor-General’s speech. I ran out of time during my speech. Where I left off, I was discussing our positive local campaign that we put forward to the people of Swan at the election. As I said, we wanted to win the election on positivity, not negativity. I had just reached the fifth part of our five-point local plan.

Madam Speaker, you will not be surprised to hear that the fifth point is continued representation in Canberra for my constituents who are affected by aircraft noise. This remains an issue in the electorate of Swan and has been a particular issue since the previous government changed the flight paths back in 2008 with very minimal community consultation. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since then, including a Senate inquiry, which I will not go back over in my speech today due to the lack of time. However, I do want to make one point, and that is this. In the last parliament the Labor Party confirmed that they were the only party that is opposed to taking any sort of action on aircraft noise in Perth when they voted against the private member’s legislation called the aircraft noise insulation (Perth Airport) amendment bill 2011, a bill that some may have referred to as the Moylan-Irons bill.

The Liberal Party, the National Party, the Greens party and the Independents were all in support of this bill, leaving only the Labor Party opposed. For months this legislation was delayed until a last-minute deal stitched up by the member for Grayndler saw a key Independent who had previously indicated support abstain from the vote, and it was lost by
That member was Mr Windsor, who held the seat of New England. I am just letting my constituents know who the abstaining member was. Also, the other Independents who failed to meet their commitment were the member for Denison; the member for Lyne, Mr Oakeshott; and the member for Kennedy, Mr Katter. I hope my constituents are aware of those gentlemen not supporting the Moylan-Irons aircraft noise bill. The people of Swan live by an airport, but that does not mean flight paths should be changed without consultation. My constituents can be assured that as their local member I will continue to stand up for them in this parliament.

Just as we had a positive local plan, the coalition took a positive plan to the election, a plan of hope, reward and opportunity, a plan to stop the boats and the tragedies at sea. We promised to ease the cost-of-living pressures, a major issue out in the west, by repealing the carbon tax and repealing the mining tax, an anti-WA tax, to allow growth in my home state of WA. We put forward our plan to repair the budget, and I cannot tell you how many times during the campaign I was told by constituents that they were voting Liberal because they trusted us to sort out the budget mess. But, more than this, we promised to put the adults back in charge of this country—an end to the childish internal wars of the Labor Party that took up the complete focus of the previous government. And we are already delivering on those commitments.

Finally, I turn to my ongoing work in a couple of broader areas. I take this opportunity to state my continued commitment to representing the forgotten Australians and former child migrants, particularly as the work of the royal commission continues. The progress made over the years since the federal apology in 2009 has been significant, and the royal commission is continuing that healing process, but there is of course more to be done. As a patron of CLAN and FACT, I know I have a role to play in that process, as does the member for Kingston, who is a patron of CLAN as well. I ask all members to be aware of the special circumstances of the forgotten Australians during their constituency work over the next three years. Many have complex situations. I recently helped one such former ward of the state finalise his immigration status.

Secondly, I recommit myself to the work of the Standing Committee on Health, now in my role as the chair. The member for Kingston, who is here, is the deputy chair of that committee.

Mr McCormack: What a combination!

Mr IRONS: It is a combination, I know! During the previous five years, I have been privileged to serve on the committee as deputy chair, and we have conducted many worthwhile bipartisan inquiries. Unfortunately the previous government responded to only one of the seven reports requiring a response. As the chair, I will seek to do better.

Hopefully, in the time I have left I can convey that this is an exciting time for the electorate of Swan. Every corner you look around, there is something going on. There is development, large-scale projects and local enthusiasm. It is a great honour to be elected to represent the people of Swan as their federal member. I pledge to continue to deliver, and get results, for the people of Swan going forward. I am often told by constituents that I am well-known for my focus on local issues and my record of delivery. I look forward to the coming Senate election and hopefully to returning three Liberal senators to this place on 5 April.
Financial Advice Reforms

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (21:15): I rise today to speak about the importance of Commonwealth funded financial counselling services within my electorate of Kingston. Federal funding enables local organisations in my electorate, such as Anglicare and Uniting Communities, to provide essential services to people experiencing financial difficulty. I believe this funding is essential to helping those facing extreme financial hardship.

The Commonwealth Financial Counselling program was introduced by Labor in 1990 in response to an overwhelming demand from individuals and families seeking financial assistance. The program was aimed at assisting those most at risk of financial exclusion and disadvantage. The first increase in funding to this program came when Labor was returned to government. We recognised that the existing funding was inadequate to support the demand for services. We strengthened the program in 2008 by increasing funding for financial counselling services, increasing the funding from $2.5 million to over $20 million per annum. This enabled local organisations to continue to provide services desperately needed for the local community.

I am calling on the Abbott government today to commit to continue to provide funding for these essential services. There is huge uncertainty about the ongoing federal funding for this program. Local organisations have contacted me with their concerns because they have not been told whether or not the Abbott government intends to continue with Labor's commitment to providing this essential funding.

Debbie is one of those financial counsellors in my electorate who provides essential financial counselling services to people in need. Debbie is concerned that the financial service providers may not know until just a few weeks before their contract expires whether funding will continue. This has placed stress and pressure on both the staff and clients, who are faced with uncertainty into the future. Financial counselling is so important for my local community. People often seek free advice when they feel they have no other options left to them. Like Debbie, I am concerned that if the Abbott government chooses to cut this essential funding, many people and families in my electorate will not have access to the services they desperately need.

Financial counsellors like Debbie help people experiencing financial difficulty make informed choices by providing free and, importantly, independent and confidential support and advice. Financial counsellors provide support right across many areas, whether it is negotiating with creditors, advocacy, budgeting or referrals, just to name a few.

I understand that circumstances like sickness, family breakdowns, unemployment and overcommitting on credit can lead to financial difficulty and the need for this assistance. Financial difficulty can have a severe impact on one's physical and mental health and place a strain on relationships. Providing this support is really essential to preventing further issues. Financial counsellors also play a critical role in preventing people from getting into further financial difficulty. I know the work that happens in my electorate really does shine a spotlight on some of the common traps people can get into, warning people of these traps. As many people would know—and I have spoken about it in this place before—one of these is the large retail stores that offer interest-free deals for large household items. With these interest-free deals, people often get a store or credit card. There is no obligation. They get told they do not have to make a payment for 24 or 48 months; they have this interest-free period.
But of course, after that time expires, huge interest rates apply. Some are even up to 30 per cent. There are a lot of difficulties people can find themselves in with these and other such schemes. These include miscalculating or forgetting when the interest-free period runs out because there is no legal obligation to remind the buyer of when the interest-free period is to run out; paying only minimum repayments, which sometimes is not enough to pay off the full purchase price before the interest-free period runs out; not realising that some contracts do not allow you to make early or extra repayments; and not understanding the additional fees such as establishment fees, monthly service fees and late payment fees that actually arise.

Interest-free deals may be an attractive option for people experiencing financial difficulty. However, financial counsellors are in a good position to alert and educate people about some of the potential pitfalls that can happen. As we go into the next financial year, I call on the Abbott government to continue their ongoing funding for financial counselling services to provide certainty for this important program and ensure that the local organisations that support those in need are also supported.

**Mobile Phone Services**

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (21:20): I would like to speak tonight on mobile phone coverage and, in particular, mobile phone black spots. It has been a great frustration to me in the 6½ years I have been a member in this place that up until now there has not been one cent spent on mobile phone black spots. I can still remember sitting in this place in 2008 while the then Labor government raided the $2½ million that had been put away for the regional telecommunications infrastructure program. The Labor government took that money and squandered it on $900 payments and other such things. They left my community languishing without any mobile phone coverage.

Mobile phone coverage is not a luxury. It is something that many people take for granted. Indeed, we are getting to be a two-class society for those who are missing out on being connected. I would like to mention a couple of locations in my electorate. The village of Goolma is a reasonably densely populated area on a major road between Mudgee, Dubbo and Wellington. It has absolutely no coverage at all. These people are in danger of not being able to get assistance with road accidents. There was a bushfire there last year and one of the brigade vice captains could not be contacted because the SMS alert that goes out does not work if you do not have mobile phone coverage.

The village of Wanaaring is at the other end of my electorate, 200 kilometres west of Bourke, where the electorates of Parkes and Farrer meet. There is no way a commercial case could ever be made to put up a tower at Wanaaring. But, tragically, a gentleman died there last year because he had no ability to call for help after he had had a turn and fallen off a windmill. We need to look at places such as that. During the Coonabarabran bushfires, in which 53 homes were burnt, not only could the brigade members not be contacted but many of the evacuation SMSs that went out were not received. Those messages went out on the Telstra network. Many of the people in Coonabarabran either did not have any mobile coverage at all or were on the Baradine Optus exchange, which did not carry the SMS alerts. Communications are now taken for granted. When people send out a text, they assume someone gets it. In many cases, they do not.

I was at Condobolin last week. There are coverage needs between Condobolin and the Tottenham area, which, Madam Speaker, you know so well. The machinery is now satellite
guided and it is monitored remotely. It might be monitored in Wagga Wagga, in America or somewhere in Belgium. But, if that machine is operating in an area that does not have mobile coverage, the mechanics cannot make an assessment of what needs to be done because they need that signal. We have machinery worth hundreds of thousands of dollars that cannot be used because something as simple as mobile phone reception, which you would think you could take for granted, is not there.

There is help on the way, although I have to admit it is just a start. There is $100 million that has been set aside by the coalition for the Black Spot Programme. This will be a start towards some of these communities getting towers up. Another black spot is Copeton Dam. It is on the edge of my electorate, in the north-eastern corner, where my electorate meets that of the member for New England. At times such as long weekends, Christmas and Easter, there are close to 10,000 people at Copeton Dam. If there is an accident or an emergency on the dam, there is no way to call for help.

Mobile coverage is not a luxury. The discussion that we have been having in this place for the last few years about broadband, fibre-optic cable, fibre to the premises and so on is really irrelevant to people in these black spots. If they do not have a phone service, they become more and more isolated from the society that they live in.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (21:25): I meet a wide range of people as a local MP. I would like to share the story of one of them with you. Nancy Pittman Outten, now living in Rosewood, formerly of Raceview, is a constituent who has a daughter diagnosed with auditory processing disorder. Now 13 years old, Holly Pittman Outten has just started high school at Rosewood State High School. Nancy and her husband, Gary, first became aware that things were not quite right with Holly when she started prep. Nancy talks about how, at a Hungry Jack's birthday party for Holly, Holly became withdrawn and overwhelmed by all the noise and activity, despite being very excited about the party in the lead-up.

Later, Holly's prep teacher pointed out that Holly had low muscle tone and some problems with fine motor skills and suggested that she repeat prep before embarking on grade 1. Nancy admits to having felt frustrated with the teacher because she was not ready to hear a report like that, and neither was Gary. I think every parent can relate to or empathise with the struggle Nancy and Gary had in the early years of Holly's childhood. Nancy spoke to me of her frustration in trying to get the help she knew Holly needed. She spoke of the struggle they had getting Holly to do her homework. And she spoke of the day-to-day difficulties of parenting a child with an undiagnosed learning disorder.

I am told that auditory processing disorder is not easy to detect and diagnose. In 1954, the first real research into the disorder was carried out, but it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that research into the disorder was done in any depth. A simple definition of auditory processing disorder is 'what we do with what we hear'. I am informed that the experience of auditory processing disorder may include: distraction; high sensitivity to loud or sudden noise; difficulty spelling, reading and/or writing; poor comprehension; and disorganisation and forgetfulness. These are apparently just some of the symptoms of this disorder.

Eventually, Nancy and Gary heard about auditory processing disorder when Holly was about seven years of age. They had not heard of it before, and the all-knowing, all-powerful
Google told them, they thought, that it was dyslexia. Auditory processing disorder is formally diagnosed and assessed by an audiologist. I would like to read you a comment made by Nancy at the time of Holly's diagnosis:

The audiology report confirmed Holly has auditory processing disorder. Everything that was stored away in the back of my mind came flooding forward: can't remember spelling words; can't follow multiple instructions; reluctant to participate in class discussions; unable to do the work; doesn't understand money; being overwhelmed at her birthday party—everything I'd noticed or been told about Holly now had a reason behind it.

It is clear from Nancy's comment that Holly's diagnosis was something of a light-bulb moment for Nancy and for Gary. However, the struggles continue for Holly, Nancy, Gary and their family.

Nancy told me how connecting and communicating with other parents of children with auditory processing disorder through Facebook helped her to deal with the disorder. This turned out to be no ordinary support group. This group of parents, from right across the world, decided to pool their resources and recount their own stories in a book with a view to helping other parents and sufferers of auditory processing disorder. The book, *Same Journey Different Paths*, was published last year and gives a comprehensive and helpful overview to anyone interested in the disorder. Because auditory processing disorder varies in severity and symptoms, the reader will get a broad outlook and is bound to find help and advice from at least one of the contributor's stories.

As Nancy and her family discovered, half the battle was finding out what was actually wrong with Holly. They knew things were not as they should be but were floundering in the dark in terms of what was actually going on with her. I am an advocate of people who are proactive—of people who, when they see that something needs to be done, get in and do it. I see this trait in a lot of parents I meet in the electorate of Blair. People who have a child who is ill or who is living with disability are some of the most remarkable people I have ever encountered. I commend these parents, and I commend Nancy on her tenacity, courage and determination. I wish her, Gary and the whole family, especially Holly, well.

Debate interrupted.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) took the chair at 10:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Charlton Electorate: West Wallsend High School

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (10:31): West Wallsend High School will celebrate its 50th anniversary this month and I advise the House of the festivities to promote the history of the school and its community. Whilst the first stage of the high school was built in 1962, students at the time were required to walk around a mile back to the old central school in Brown Street for manual arts, home economics, needlework and science lessons. It was not until January 1964 that the separation of primary and secondary school students occurred with the new high school operating full-time under founding principal, Mr Reg Thomas. As so many pioneering towns did, West Wallsend grew around its colliery; this coalmining history is celebrated and preserved in the West Wallsend District Heritage Museum, located on the grounds of West Wallsend High School. Last year, I had the pleasure of touring the museum. It contains a vast collection of photographs, artefacts and memorabilia available for viewing by the public and these are also used to enhance the learning experiences of students at West Wallsend High School.

The school will hold an open day on 14 March to celebrate the anniversary and the museum plans to display a range of ex-student memorabilia on the day. The last Labor government delivered close to $15,000 towards this event, which has supported the construction of a replica poppet head made by current metals and engineering students and their teacher Kevin Gray. The poppet head sculpture will be the main feature of a commemorative garden at the entrance to the school, forever reminding those attending West Wallsend High School of the town's proud mining origins. Pavers engraved with the names and messages of past students and families will also be laid in this garden. The funding also enabled the production of a historical DVD which involved videorecording of interviews with local residents in order to preserve their memories of the town's early days. Students from the school assisted with the capture and production of the video as part of their history studies. I am proud to say that the former heritage minister, the member for Port Adelaide, visited the school with me last year and recorded a personal message for this DVD which will be buried in a time capsule at the open day.

I would like to thank the principal of West Wallsend High School, Ann Campbell, and her staff—in particular, Daniel Winter, Leah Buchanan, Kerri Cottrill and Mara Ellerton—along with Lillian Price and the Sugarloaf District Heritage Group for their work in promoting the school's history within our community. West Wallsend has a proud history of coalmining—it is the heart of that community—and this project will add to that legacy, in conjunction with murals that are appearing in the town commemorating this proud history. I wish the school and past and present students of West Wallsend High School a happy 50th anniversary and wish them all the best for their celebrations.

Murphy, Ms Allison

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10:34): Sometimes terrible things happen to good people. When tragedy strikes it makes you pause for a moment and be grateful for all the
wonderful things you have in life, and our everyday flotsam and jetsam pales into insignificance. I first met Allison Murphy during my campaign to come back to the parliament in 2004. Alli worked for my good friend and former colleague Senator the Hon. Judith Troeth. Alli worked as the senator's media adviser while she was the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Alli said of that time:

She was a fantastic boss and a wonderful mentor. She encouraged me to strike out on my own to start up Redstick.

I can remember Alli leading a planning day at my office in Warragul with my staff, bringing forth some really bright ideas and holding court with her infectious enthusiasm for the task at hand. Alli had a bright, strategic mind and looked after her boss, Judith, as part of team Troeth beautifully.

Towards the end of 2004 Alli decided to open a major new chapter in her life and branch out on her own by establishing her own business. From vision to fruition, Redstick Strategic Communications was a yield of that new beginning. Redstick quickly became a very successful operation in Alli's hometown of Geelong. Alli was involved in many aspects of Geelong community life, particularly in the last 10 years, including as a board member of Committee for Geelong and many other not-for-profit initiatives.

Along the way Alli met a wonderful man to share her life with, Pete Stevens, or 'Stevo', as she referred to him. Alli and Stevo brought into the world adorable twins, Charley and Lucy, who just started school this year and were the apple of their mother's eye. Just a few days ago on Facebook, Alli lamented they were growing up so quickly. Ali was also very much loved by her stepson, Tom, who was flown in from Canada this week.

Priscilla Ruffolo, who worked with Alli in team Troeth and on my campaign in 2004, loved Alli. Priscilla describes Alli as 'bubbly and smiley—she was larger than life'. In many ways Alli was an absolute pleasure to work with. She was dedicated to her work and family but, importantly, managed to find a balance between work and family. Alli was an absolute hoot to be around; a negative was always turned into a positive. That Redstick was the success it was was a testament to her hard work and determination.

Alli was completely adored by her husband and children. She loved everything Italian. Before she finished with Judith, Alli went on a European adventure to find her inner Italian. She would always say 'ciao, bella'. One of the best things about Alli was that even after she finished work with team Troeth, her colleagues loved that she always took the time to stay in touch with little notes and thoughtful gestures. Priscilla also remembers that Alli's husband was a passionate yachtsie and he was, at one stage, the Commodore of the Geelong Yacht Club. When they got married Alli loved this position because she was able to hold the title of 'Madam Commodore of the yacht club'.

Earlier this week Alli was meant to begin the day the same as any other. At some stage last Monday morning she collapsed and suffered a catastrophic brain injury. Alli could not be revived and tragically a bright light in many of our lives is now extinguished. I want to pay tribute to a young woman who was an outstanding community leader with a brilliant mind and a good friend to many of us in this place. Rest in peace, dear Alli.
Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (10:37): Yesterday I attended a special service at the Dinmore Murri Baptist Church in Ipswich to commemorate the anniversary of the national apology to the stolen generations. Something special happened in this parliament six years ago. Then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made a formal apology to Australia's first peoples and, in particular, the stolen generations. That apology was on behalf of the nation and on behalf of the parliament. I had the privilege of reading the apology aloud to the congregation at Sunday's service at the Dinmore Murri Baptist Church and giving out beautiful Indigenous rosary beads to the appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I must say, giving out rosary beads in a Baptist church was quite novel.

Reading the statement aloud reinforced for me the objective behind the apology—closing the gap. We have seen improvements and positive outcomes, including access to early childhood education, improvements in literacy, increased rates of young people completing year 12 or equivalent qualifications, and improvements in child mortality rates. But there is no time for complacency and no time to try and cut your way to closing the gap.

Today I would like to talk about a member of the Dinmore Murri Baptist congregation and share with you the story of one of the elders, Aunty Narella Simpson. I see Narella nearly everywhere. She was born in Cunnamulla. Her mother is a Ugarapul woman from Ipswich and her father is from Bundaberg. Although Narella grew up in south-west communities, her heart is with Ipswich and certainly the eastern suburbs in and around Dinmore and Riverview.

Narella says: 'I had a good upbringing. We respected our parents and appreciated what our parents gave us.' Narella has four children, 14 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. She has volunteered in the Ipswich community for 31 years and is a longstanding member of the Dinmore Murri Baptist Church. I could not tell you how many local events Narella has been involved in or organised for the church community and for the Ipswich community. A strong advocate for social justice issues, Narella almost praised me and praised the nation for closing the gap. Narella works passionately and tirelessly helping people in the Ipswich community. This advocacy requires her to work closely with government agencies and with local members of parliament, and I am proud to be her federal MP.

It is always a pleasure to run into Narella and to chat with her. She always gives me local knowledge of Indigenous background—where you get the best local tucker and all the things around the Ipswich area. It is simply amazing. She says she is not frightened to reach out and ask for help and not frightened to identify herself with her own culture and people. She tells the story about the time she met former Prime Minister Julia Gillard and accosted her at the Ipswich flood evacuation centre. What was Narella doing during the flood? She was looking after young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mums and their who were flood affected. It is typical of Narella and the work she does for her local community, and she brought a smile to Julia Gillard's face that day.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10:40): I rise to speak on a matter which is of particular importance to many residents in my electorate of Ryan, and that is prostate cancer preventative screening and treatment. Many individuals in the Ryan community have contacted me with their concerns about the lack of government subsidies for reliable

Prostate Cancer

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10:40): I rise to speak on a matter which is of particular importance to many residents in my electorate of Ryan, and that is prostate cancer preventative screening and treatment. Many individuals in the Ryan community have contacted me with their concerns about the lack of government subsidies for reliable
preventative screening of prostate cancer and modern treatments available for victims of prostate cancer. Each year in Australia, close to 3,300 men die of prostate cancer. This number is equal to the number of women who die from breast cancer annually. Around 20,000 new prostate cancer cases are diagnosed in Australia each year. While prostate cancer is most common in men over the age of 50, younger men with a history of prostate cancer in their family are at greater risk. Understandably, the majority of those who have contacted me are men. However, everyone is affected when a loved one falls victim to prostate cancer.

Prostate cancer can be cured if detected early and treated while still confined to the prostate gland. The tests for prostate cancer are the prostate-specific antigen blood test and the DRE. However, these tests do not give a conclusive diagnosis of cancer. Other more reliable methods, such as an MRI or a biopsy, are not subsidised by the government.

In terms of treatment, the difference between the old-style open surgery and robotic or laparoscopic surgery is about two weeks in hospital as opposed to two days, and a much greater chance of a satisfactory outcome. One of the biggest problems with prostate surgery is the chance of damaging the nerves surrounding the prostate. This damage is significantly reduced using less invasive keyhole or robotic surgery, therefore ensuring a better outcome for the patient. Old-fashioned open surgeries run the risks of impotence and incontinence as well as a higher risk of infection. These newer keyhole and robot-assisted surgeries are considered nerve-sparing surgeries, which aim to protect specific nerves, minimising the side effects of surgery. The techniques of nerve-sparing surgery are becoming more common and the potency rates are now as high as 90 per cent with early-stage cancer. These keyhole surgeries involve the insertion of telescopes through small incisions in the body and can also include robotic assistance in conducting the actual surgery. Yet laparoscopic and radical prostatectomy and robot-assisted laparoscopic prostatectomy are not subsidised by the government.

Some of the gentlemen who have contacted me after undergoing surgery and are now survivors of prostate cancer ask me why there is so little support for victims of prostate cancer, as opposed to women with breast cancer, especially when just as many men die from prostate cancer in Australia each year. They expressed particular concern about the high impotency rates that go with the older surgery methods and the high out-of-pocket expenses that they are faced with when dealing with procedures for the removal or change of a catheter after the initial surgery.

On behalf of the many constituents who have contacted me on this issue, women as well as men, I commend the actions of individuals lobbying the government for better financial assistance in the screening and treatment of prostate cancer with modern, faster and safer medical techniques.

**Scullin Electorate: Broadband**

**Mr GILES (Scullin) (10:43):** In the lead-up to last year's elections as I campaigned to win the confidence of the electors of Scullin, the NBN rollout was a feature of many conversations, generally taken by the constituents to me rather than the other way around. Right across the Scullin electorate, there was a real sense of excitement—in particular amongst those communities, such as South Morang and Mill Park, in which the NBN was already being rolled out. Voters were excited by Labor's 21st century nation building and what bridging the digital divide might mean to them and their communities—the promise of a
new world of work and of leisure was especially revolutionary in outer suburban communities.

So I read with interest on 21 February that NBN Co were launching the trial of what is described as an 'alternative broadband network' in Epping in Victoria in the heart of the Scullin electorate. This is, of course, not the rollout of the Labour's fibre-to-the-home National Broadband Network but instead the coalition's fibre-to-somewhere-in-your-neighbourhood-and-copper-to-your-home network. I noted a report in the Business Spectator that mentions:

… the areas selected for trials have seen substantial remediation from Telstra prior to providing access to NBN Co.

I am not surprised that the coalition would not want to use part of the copper network that reportedly sits in plastic bags to keep it out of the rain, but wouldn't that be the real test of the copper network? The coalition is clearly afraid of what such a test would yield. Why else would it resort to doctoring these trials by using a patched-up part of the copper network, which it will then use to pretend that all users on the network can expect to receive the same speeds? Is this substantial remediation going to occur across the network? I doubt it.

The government says its copper to the home network can be rolled out faster. Given that households are already connected to the copper network, I should hope so. What an extraordinary proposition that this is the best justification they can find. But I can think of a more substantial and cost-effective remediation that should be rolled out—Labor's National Broadband Network. To talk about its benefits, I refer to an NBN Co media release from the 24 February of this year, 'Melbourne's copper countdown. Silver surfers urged to jump on the broadband bandwagon'. It quotes a lucky Brunswick local, who said he:

… [recommends] it to anyone who likes connecting with their family and friends over the internet—and that—

With the NBN we can manage our finances online, stream Italian news programs and Skype with our friends and family from all over the world. Our old ADSL was so unreliable we couldn’t do any of those things, but the NBN has opened my eyes up to what I can do with the internet.

As a candidate I had many such conversations, and these continue now I am a member. In particular, I see how the digital hub at the Mill Park library was opening up a new world to so many right across the community via interest in the possibilities of the NBN—Labor's NBN. I remember one man who had bought his first computer at 80 and with it a new lease on life due to Labor's fibre-to-the-home NBN. If only all residents in Scullin, and indeed throughout Australia, could be as fortunate as this gentleman in Mill Park. This government is ensuring premises on one side of the street will have superfast internet while premises on the other side are stuck in the slow lane.

**Sport**

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (10:46): Thank you, Deputy Speaker Scott; I know you will be hanging on this. To the Townsville Fire team, congratulations to all concerned. The second grand final in the Women's National Basketball League in a row. We will travel to Bendigo—I see the member opposite, the member for Bendigo, is very keen to see the Townsville Fire in Bendigo again—this weekend where this time we will go all the way. We will beat Bendigo. The whole city is behind coach, Chris Lucas; our captain, Rachael McCully—she is
no longer Flanagan; Suzy and all the girls. Can I wish a very happy birthday, a special birthday, to assistant coach, former player and all round great girl, Claudia Brassard. Claudia, for your birthday we got you a grand final. What you have to do from there is win the thing.

I also say a special thank you to the ABC. The ABC are the national broadcast partner for women's NBL. Queensland remains on correct time—New South Wales and Victoria jump an hour ahead for whatever reason—but the ABC have changed their telecast time so that we in Queensland can watch the fantastic Townsville Fire play basketball for glory. We will win in Bendigo this weekend. Get behind our Fire, Townsville; get behind our girls. They are fantastic bunch, and they will win this weekend.

My city of Townsville also now has its first NRL silverware. It adorns the North Queensland Toyota Cowboys' mantle as I speak. Winning the Auckland Nines was a fantastic way to start the year. Paul Green's new defensive patterns took a little bit of time for the guys to get used to on a playing field, but once we got them down pat our line was barely crossed. It was a great quarter final against Auckland, then a great semifinal and an even better final to beat the Broncos at the end.

An honourable member: Were you playing?

Mr EWEN JONES: I was not there, mate; I had nothing to do with it. To all concerned at the Cowboys—remember for any organisation to succeed, your back office needs to be strong so that your front office can succeed—from Chairman, Laurence Lancini, CEO, Peter Jourdain, and player managers, Peter Parr and Michael Luck, to the coaching staff, Paul Green, David Furner and Terry Matterson, I wish you all the best for season 2014. To the playing group headed by the magnificent Johnathan Thurston and the super tough and rugged Matt Scott, I wish you all the best. My son Andrew and I will be there on the weekend when we belt Canberra. It will be funny this year, Deputy Speaker, seeing the Cowboys run out without the fantastic Matty Bowen in the No. 1 jersey. If there is ever an icon in the sport for Aboriginal and Islander Australians, it is Matty Bowen—a truly great Australian. It was incredibly unlucky for a bloke by the name of Lachlan Coote, who came up from Penrith to come to us. I wish you all the best. The Cowboys are my team and we do it to the dot.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (10:49): I congratulate the former speaker on his spirit in speaking about the team for Townsville that will be taking on the Bendigo Spirit this Sunday in an important grand final which I am sure the minor premiers, the Bendigo Spirit, will again win. It is great for sport in general that we in this House are speaking about women's sport, because quite often women's sport is not flagged, as it should be, as an area of importance.

I am here today to flag another area of importance which has received quite a bit of attention—that is, the changes being proposed by the new coalition government to our welfare system and the falsehoods and the rhetoric coming from the government about supporting those most in need. They are using phrases such as 'the age of entitlement is over'. For whom is the age of entitlement over? What specifically are we talking about? The government claims that in 10 to 15 years Australia will find itself in the same situation as some European countries. Who are you referring to? Who are you going to be targeting if you reduce entitlements as you say they need to be?

This rhetoric is preparing people for a budget of savage cuts. Classic coalition tactics involve creating a sense of crisis to pave the way for cruel cuts to the living standards of
vulnerable Australians. The fact is that many in our community are struggling to survive on current payments, particularly Newstart, and are already living in poverty. I will highlight two particular women I met with recently in my electorate.

One is a single parent who is now on Newstart, and she is trying desperately to find work. Her daughter is 11 years old, and she came in to see me with $6,000 worth of debt. These are not big debts; they are her telephone bill, her rates, her school fees and her electricity bill—just your classic, standard bills. She has $200 left in her bank account. She said to me: 'You, Lisa, decide which bill I pay.' This is reality for so many people living on low Newstart payments.

The other is a woman suffering from Lyme disease. She is too sick to work, and every six months she has to go in to Centrelink to prove she is too sick to work. Her mother is now supporting her, and is it fortunate for this woman—Christie is her name—that her mother is in a position to support her, because otherwise she and her children would be going without.

Our country should continue to be based upon the principles of equity and opportunity. We should ensure that all are looked after when they are in need and that people are given the opportunity to pick themselves back up if they need to. (Time expired)

**Macarthur Electorate: Inter Dominion Championship**

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (10:52): Yesterday I attended the 2014 Inter Dominion Sydney harness racing carnival at Tabcorp Park, Menangle. The Inter Dominion is harness racing's premier event, and I felt very proud to see it hosted in my electorate again this year. The event has been contested since 1936, rotating around cities across Australia and New Zealand. This year's heats were held in Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and New Zealand, and the finals are being held at Tabcorp Park, Menangle, for the three consecutive years 2013, 2014 and 2015.

More than 10,000 people attended the event yesterday, and I can tell you that the atmosphere was electric. The day included a 10-race program, fashions on the field and featured seven group-1 races with a pool of more than $2 million in prize money and trophies. The winner of this year's Inter Dominion was Beautide, and his trainer/driver James Rattray—and I am sure, all Tasmanians—are very happy with the result.

To have an international event of this standard held in Macarthur is fantastic for local tourism and our economy. I congratulate Tabcorp Park Menangle on the success of this event, which was organised in partnership with the New South Wales state government. I also congratulate the New South Wales Harness Racing Club and Harness Racing New South Wales. As the Federal member for Macarthur I feel very proud to have an event of such high standard held in my electorate for three years running.

The chief executive of New South Wales Harness Racing, John Dumesny, has told the local media that the championship was the pinnacle of harness racing events in the southern hemisphere. He said it gave the club great pleasure to host the event in Macarthur. I congratulate John and the chairman of Harness Racing New South Wales, Rex Horne, and the chairman of Tabcorp Park Menangle, Ray Sharman, and its board of directors on a successful carnival this year.

Aside from the grand final on Sunday, there were several events held in my electorate as part of the Inter Dominion carnival. These included a Valentine's Day breakfast and lunch
with the stars and a golf day as well as heats and a barrier draw for this year's grand final. There was certainly an element of excitement in the air throughout my electorate in the lead-up to yesterday's Inter Dominion—and for good reason. Yesterday was a sensational event, and I stand here today to congratulate everyone involved.

Whilst the Inter Dominion Carnival was a fantastic event yesterday, I would also like to commend Tabcorp Park Menangle as a major contributor to local community groups and sporting associations in my electorate. Over the years, the organisation has donated thousands of dollars to support local organisations. These include: Macarthur Disability Services, the DA Global Swimathon for Cystic Fibrosis, Society 389, St Vincent de Paul Society, and the Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation, just to name a few.

Tabcorp Park Menangle is a fantastic corporate citizen of my electorate. The support they give to community groups, charities and organisations of Macarthur sets a great example to other businesses and corporations across the region. I thank them for the part they play in putting my electorate on the map and their contribution to making Macarthur such a great place to visit and live.

**Corio Electorate: Health Services**

*Mr MARLES (Corio) (10:55):* In my electorate of Corio, Geelong's northern suburbs have above average rates of chronic disease, a high incidence of mental illness and significant outpatient requirements, and yet there are fewer local services available to support them. A strong healthcare system is a fundamental pillar of a productive and happy society, and so I am of the firm belief that reliable healthcare should be a consistent priority of any government. The previous Labor government committed $1 million to fund the essential development of a local health services plan for the north. The federal funding would have investigated the local and future health needs of Geelong's northern suburbs to enable better access to health services. This plan would have laid the foundation for growth of health services in the north and strengthened the capacity of the local health sector to support the diverse range of complex health needs which are increasingly prevalent in the northern suburbs. Sadly, the actions of the Abbott government clearly demonstrate they are not willing to make the health of our communities a priority and address the needs of Geelong's north. At a time when the Liberal government are effectively attempting to dismantle our Medicare system with the imposition of GP fees, there is a greater need than ever for the provision of better health services in the north of Geelong—particularly through the provision of an outpatients centre in Geelong's north.

This need was highlighted last week by the *Geelong Advertiser* as they told the stories of locals who have been victims of Geelong's struggling health system, having to travel to Ballarat and Werribee to seek faster immediate care. This is very clear indication that our health care system is not equipped for the needs of the north and swift action is required to prevent residents from continuing to be put in this position in the future.

We know Geelong's north is growing rapidly, with a planned 4000-home development at Lara West predicted to accommodate an additional 10,000 residents and other areas of the region constantly expanding, meaning there is even greater urgency to have a solid community health plan in place for the future.
The bulk of funding for the bricks and mortar of a health facility in the north will inevitably need to come from the state government. I believe the time has come for that funding to start to flow. There is no doubt there are a flood of projects in Geelong all desperate to secure vital state government dollars; however, there is no more important building block to a healthy community than a hospital. Any dollars we receive from the state government simply must be directed to a hospital in the north.

This is even more important because the Abbott government simply appears unwilling to invest in health. Persistently working to strip funding from our public hospitals, the government already plans to spend $400 million less over the next three years on public hospitals than what was committed under Labor. So, considering the government's approach to health, there is undoubtedly a huge challenge ahead for the north—a difficult challenge in which I am committed to remaining an advocate for because right now there is no greater community need in Geelong's north than better health services. (Time expired)

Riverina Electorate: Tumbatrek

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) 10:59: The best of Tumbarumba Shire was again on display on Saturday, 1 February, as more than 80 people trekked 13.88 kilometres on the Hume and Hovell track, taking in some of the region's rich beauty and diversity—some of Australia's best in this regard. Started in 1985 by former Nationals leader and Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, Tumbatrek is steeped in the majesty of the natural beauty of Tumbarumba Shire and Australian political history. Now in its third year since I took over the reins and resumed the walk from Tim Fischer, I was joined by federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion, New South Wales Premier Barry O'Farrell—and I can hear the member for Grayndler; Anthony Albanese, you are most welcome to come along at any time, and certainly some heavyweight Labor figures have been on the trek as well. We were also joined by Albury MP Greg Aplin, as well as member for Wagga Wagga Daryl Maguire. The New South Wales Premier used the opportunity to encourage city people to travel to parts of regional New South Wales to see the beauty of our state, particularly in the Snowy Mountains. With many attractions, including a strong wine industry as well as local motels, sightseeing opportunities and proximity to major centres such as Wagga Wagga and Albury, Mr O'Farrell said the Tumbarumba Shire was a great place for Sydneysiders to spend their tourism dollar in the country. I would also argue that Victorian tourists are always welcome, too.

A strong contingent also represented local government, with Tumbarumba Mayor Ian Chaffey and many Tumbarumba councillors joining in, as well as Temora Mayor Rick Firman and Wagga Wagga Mayor Rod Kendall. Many locals also joined the trek, including students from Tumbarumba High School. They are participating in the Tumbarumba 2 Kokoda program and will walk Kokoda Track on Anzac Day 2015. They will do this in honour of Joseph Muggleton, a local boy who died fighting with the 2/12th Battalion in Buna in 1943 at the height of the World War II conflict in Papua New Guinea.

Despite the heat, the 80-strong contingent enjoyed the trek and they were then treated to the hospitality of the Tumbarumba council for lunch. They also received a commemorative medal. Congratulations to all who participated, particularly the organiser, Marilyn Gilbert, of the council; she always does a great job. When you go trekking along the Hume and Hovell Track, along places with such romantic names such as Wild Mares Gully, the Coffee Pot rest
point, Perrots Flat and finishing at Paddys River Dam, it is always a wonderful trek to go on. Tim Fischer started this back in the mid eighties, and you never knew what you were going to get with Tim. He would often do a press conference along the way. At the top of Mt Kosciuszko, which is in the Riverina electorate, he would often hold a press conference and tell them what was going on in the nation. It certainly brought the nation's spotlight to Tumbarumba. I look forward to doing the trek again next year with the member for Grayndler.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Infrastructure

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (11:02): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) that investment in infrastructure is a vital contributor to economic growth;
(b) the broad support in the House for:

(i) the principle that infrastructure priorities should be developed by experts, based on the benefit to the national economy;
(ii) Infrastructure Australia as an independent source of infrastructure advice to government; and
(iii) the continuance and enhancement of the successful role played by Infrastructure Australia since its formation in 2008; and
(c) the overwhelming desire of infrastructure providers, financiers, and others involved in the infrastructure chain, for a robust, bipartisan approach to the governance of Infrastructure Australia; and

(2) resolves that:

(a) the issue of the future governance of Infrastructure Australia be referred to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications for consideration and report back to the House by 30 April 2014;
(b) the Committee seeks formal submissions from the public, and specifically stakeholders across the infrastructure chain, on the matter of the governance of Infrastructure Australia;
(c) Infrastructure Australia, the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, other relevant federal agencies, COAG and its member governments, including local government, be specifically requested to provide input; and
(d) until such time as this review is completed, the Infrastructure Australia Amendment Bill 2013 not be further proceeded with in the House or the other place.

Getting the right advice on infrastructure development is essential to maximise value for public investment and encourage private sector activity. Infrastructure is a key to future productivity growth, future jobs growth and a better quality of life for all Australians. It is therefore critical that Infrastructure Australia, the independent adviser to government, be allowed to retain its independence and be able to publish its impartial findings about the infrastructure needs of the country.

The Infrastructure Australia Amendment Bill will compromise Infrastructure Australia's independence. This bill should be withdrawn. It is an affront to the important concepts of
evidence-based decision making and transparency. It has been roundly criticised by experts whose motive in offering criticism is not political but based purely on what they know about Infrastructure Australia and the broad infrastructure investment scene in this country. No less an organisation than the Business Council of Australia, representing the nation's biggest companies, has criticised this bill as an attack on Infrastructure Australia's independence. The Urban Development Association of Australia is also concerned. These people are not politicians; they are experts. We need a debate about why it is that the Abbott government wants to undermine Infrastructure Australia.

My motion today proposes that the Infrastructure Australia Amendment Bill 2013 be withdrawn and be referred to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications. I propose this because when the Minister for Infrastructure introduced this bill he assured the House that it would strengthen Infrastructure Australia. This is clearly untrue. This bill was gagged through the House of Representatives even though it was not due to be considered until after a Senate inquiry in March. There are at least two areas where the amendments to the operation of Infrastructure Australia will be severely compromised by this bill. The fact is that Infrastructure Australia has a critical role which will be undermined if this bill is passed.

Infrastructure Australia was created by Labor in 2008. Its design was specifically focused on independence, because Labor wanted to disconnect the infrastructure investment cycle—which is necessarily long term—from the short-term political cycle. IA conducted an audit of the nation's infrastructure needs and created an infrastructure investment priority list based on the potential for a project to contribute to lifting national productivity. Importantly, it took away the piecemeal approach of examining a single project in isolation. It recognised the need for integrated approaches and released a national ports strategy, a national land freight strategy and, more recently, a national urban transport strategy.

Infrastructure Australia's recommendations were based on cold, hard facts—including political considerations. Any government interest in boosting productivity, and thereby opening the way for jobs growth, will be well served by following its recommendations. That is why the former Labor government funded all 15 out of 15 of the top IA recommendations for major investments. We did not pick and choose according to the electoral map; we used productivity gains as our yardstick.

This current bill will undermine the IA's independence. Firstly, the Minister for Infrastructure wants to order Infrastructure Australia about what it can and cannot research. In particular, the changes allow the minister to order IA to exclude complete classes of investment from its research considerations. This fails to understand that, when you look at transport infrastructure, you need to look at the relationship between passenger and freight, as well as the relationship between rail and road. You need to look at the way that the cities and regions function in order to get the right outcomes. This is retrospectively attempting to justify the stripping of billions of dollars from projects like the Melbourne Metro and the Cross River Rail project, both of which have been recommended by Infrastructure Australia. It is also aimed at justifying the removal of $500 million that has been allocated for Western Australian public transport projects, both in terms of light rail and also heavy rail to the airport. This move will undermine the very functioning of Infrastructure Australia.
A second change, which is just as serious, would allow the minister to prohibit Infrastructure Australia from publishing its findings. Transparency is absolutely critical. At the moment, Infrastructure Australia publishes that information. It is therefore critical that the transparent operation of Infrastructure Australia be defended. It is one of the statements that was made by the Business Council of Australia, who said in their submission to the bill:

The ability to undertake this evaluation without interference is critical to the effective operation of an independent and empowered IA. It is unclear why there should be a need for a power to carve out 'classes of projects'… Good planning should prioritise any infrastructure projects of the highest economic and social value, and not differentiate by project class …

The submission continues:

It is critical to public confidence in the decisions made by government that wherever possible these evaluations are made public, and a huge component of public disclosure is the publication of these reports…

Further:

It would be a concern if evaluations are not published because the demonstrated economic or social value is at odds with the decision by government about whether or not to support a particular investment. Publication of evaluations should be the norm except where there is a justifiable reason not to do so.

It is clear that the Business Council of Australia submission, as well as the other submissions—including Infrastructure Partnerships Australia and, indeed, the submission from the Infrastructure Australia coordinator himself—shows that they are on to what the government is aiming to do here, which is to go back to the old pork-barrelling provisions, whereby you have decisions made without proper analysis. We can see this happening in the way that funding is being allocated in Melbourne by this government, which it has foreshadowed without proper cost-benefit analysis.

It is not just the BCA; the UDIA said it:

… objects to this provision on the grounds that it impairs Infrastructure Australia’s ability to objectively evaluate projects based on their merit, and introduces the potential for political bias.

This is absolutely critical and on Friday the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee heard further concerns from Infrastructure Partnerships and the Moving People 2030 Task Force. Departmental representatives at that hearing seemed unclear as to the operation of the bill.

Last month the Treasurer played host to the G20 finance ministers in Sydney. During that meeting he strongly emphasised the need for infrastructure investment to drive global economic growth. In that objective he was right, but that is completely undermined by this legislation that was rammed through the House without proper consideration. It undermines the very reason Infrastructure Australia was established. Infrastructure Australia was established to have proper analysis of integrated plans for the way that cities, regions and the entire nation functions. Infrastructure Australia has been an enormous success that is being undermined by those promoting this change. Infrastructure Australia was a part of the creation of the new infrastructure department, and my appointment as Australia's first ever infrastructure minister was a recognition that you need integrated plans because there are interrelational suches between transport, energy, water and communications, and you need a body which is able to examine those issues.
The Treasurer was right at the G20, but it is hard to believe his sincerity when the
government of which he is a part is dismantling the existing evidence-based system for
making decisions about infrastructure investment. It is time to stop the charade and go back
to the drawing board via a full inquiry by the House of Representatives committee. That would
enable proper analysis and proper input from the business and research communities to ensure
that we get the right outcomes through proper legislation, and if amendments that are of merit
need to be considered the opposition is certainly prepared to do that. What we are not
prepared to do is exclude entire classes of transport or infrastructure developments and
remove the transparency provisions that are currently there in the Infrastructure Australia
legislation. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:12): I listened to the shadow minister and member for
Grayndler with great interest. Part (1)(b)(i) of his motion says that the investment
infrastructure makes a vital
contribution to economic growth. Yes, we agree with that. It says
there is broad support in the House for:

(i) the principle that infrastructure priorities should be developed by experts, based on the benefit to
the national economy;

Of course, we all agree with those words but it is worthwhile having a look at what happened
over the previous six years and then understanding the reason why we need this change. The
first exhibit I will give is the train wreck of the NBN. So far, we have seen after six years of
promises just a three per cent rollout. That has cost the taxpayer $7 billion. This is a project
that is hopelessly behind schedule and hopelessly over budget. This was a project with the
biggest infrastructure spend we had seen under the previous Labor government, and yet it did
not have any of the required cost-benefit analysis that we have talked about. It did not have
any of the transparency that the former minister talked about. The NBN is the greatest
example of why the Infrastructure Australia Amendment Bill is needed and why this motion
should be rejected. One of the great reasons the so-called experts put forward for having an
NBN was that we were going to become a gigabit nation. A press release from 19 April says:

Australia will become a Gigabit Nation before the end of the year …

Can you guess how many end-users in fact connected to this so-called 'gigabit nation'? The
answer is zero: not one single customer took up the offering of the NBN. We were told that it
was important that the NBN be rolled out so that the connection speed could go to 250
megabits. But can you guess how many customers have signed up for the NBN's 250
megabits? The answer is one: one single customer.

A further example of the former government's infrastructure problems is the great Epping-
to-Parramatta rail link. It was promised in 2010 with great hoopla and publicity, but it was
never among the national infrastructure priorities. It was simply an example of pork-barrelling: the former Labor government's rolling out a project for political ends and not for
the sake of what the country needs.

We only have to look at what the Australian National Audit Office said about Labor's
infrastructure expenditure. In 2010 its report found that Labor had handed $2.2 billion in
taxpayers' funds to eight infrastructure projects which its own advisers had questioned as
economically unviable or not ready to proceed. This is what happened under the previous
Labor government. But do not take my word for it; take the word of Lindsay Tanner, the
former finance minister, who attacked his former colleagues and said that they were ignoring
the national interest and handing out infrastructure spending irrespective of merit, for political rather than economic gain. Such are the reasons that change is needed.

Another great example of the former government's problems with infrastructure is the Moorebank Intermodal project. Treasury and Infrastructure Australia criticised the former Labor government's plans. They said that the private sector was organised and ready to start but that the former government knew better and wanted to do it itself using public money rather than private money. The government's analysis of the project was completely flawed in many ways. I will go through a few of them in the time left.

Firstly, the government's analysis completely overestimated the growth in the number of containers in Sydney. Between the years 2000 and 2008 there was a very large increase—around eight per cent per annum—in the number of containers in Sydney, and the former Labor government forecast that the same rate of growth would go on forever. But that is not what has happened; the forecast growth has not occurred. There are many reasons for this. One is that the goods that people are buying are becoming smaller. Take books—many people are now buying online books rather than traditional books. Look at how computers are decreasing in size. Compare the size of a flat-screen TV to the old-fashioned-style TV. Many of the goods we are buying are coming down in size. But this was not thought through by the previous government, so they panicked and said, 'We need an intermodal terminal in Western Sydney.'

Secondly, the intermodal concept itself is flawed. The concept is that you put on rail a container which arrives at the port in Sydney, and you take it out to Western Sydney and distribute it from there. I often hear the former minister say that the intermodal project would take trucks off the road. That would be true if the containers ended up in a great big hole where the intermodal terminal was, but the fact is that the goods in the containers would end up going by road anyway unless there were a rail siding next to each of the warehouses where the containers were being unloaded. So an intermodal terminal would not remove trucks from the roads; at best it could reduce the distances that a truck needed to travel by road. That is why it is very important to do an analysis of where the containers would end up before the goods in them were distributed. Guess what? In the former government's analysis, this simply has not been done. What we heard from the former minister was how wonderful all of Labor's plans were, but no analysis was done of where those containers actually go today. I have arranged for that analysis to be done; if we look at it, the market has simply rejected the Liverpool and Moorebank area as a point to distribute containers.

If we look at the map, the majority of Sydney's containers go to the Eastern Creek area. There are 890 TEU movements from that Eastern Creek area, and that is 25 kilometres from where this Moorebank intermodal is going to be located. So why wouldn't you locate—if you are having an intermodal in Western Sydney, you need to have it located where the containers actually end up. There is no point putting it on a rail link, only to have to unloaded it there and still truck it 25 kilometres away. But, unfortunately, that is what this plan from the previous Labor government does. We also have the Enfield intermodal opening up in the coming months. It will capture anything inland back to the coast from Moorebank. So the whole area around Moorebank has been rejected by the market, and the reason it has been rejected by the market is simply because it is a bad location to distribute containers from. We have the
Copeland Road section of the Hume Highway in Liverpool—one of the worst black spots in the country, as identified by the NRMA.

The other thing the previous government failed to do with their infrastructure planning is to look at where the containers need to go tomorrow. And if you look at the plans for Sydney, we have a Western Sydney area of economic development: we have an economic zone there, we have an area of development to the south, an area of development to the north. There are 500,000 residences aimed to go in that area—that is almost half the size of Brisbane—with Badgerys Creek in the middle. If we are going to build an intermodal, the ideal spot in Western Sydney is Badgerys Creek, but unfortunately the previous government's plans never even looked at that.

One of the other real concerns I have is their analysis of the pollution, which was another thing that was done very poorly. Yes, when we put a container on rail rather than road, we burn less diesel fuel. The problem is that when we burn that diesel fuel in the existing locomotives, the particulate matter that those diesel trains spew out, as compared to a modern truck, is actually five to 10 to almost 20 times greater. So we are not going to reduce pollution; this will increase the amount of particulate pollution in Western Sydney, and particulate pollution is the pollution that kills. Overall, it is very important—the previous government's analysis of infrastructure spending was neither transparent nor independent. That is why the change is needed, and that is what this change will do. That is why this motion should be rejected, and the bill should be passed. (Time expired)

Mr GILES (Scullin) (11:22): It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Hughes, and it was particularly useful for me to listen to his contribution to this debate, and—

Mr Craig Kelly: Listen and learn, listen and learn!

Mr GILES: I did do a bit of learning; I have learnt a lot about Sydney's intermodal freight needs. But before the member for Hughes turned to that matter, he went through a number of examples with which he found fault going to the previous government's management of significant infrastructure projects. While I do not agree with the conclusions he drew, it is hard to understand that contribution as being anything other than a contribution in support of the principles underpinning this motion—that is, the call for a greater degree of transparency and more evidence as the basis in the rollout of significant infrastructure projects; the call for the principles set out in the member for Grayndler's motion.

Moving on to that motion, I am always grateful for any opportunity to speak on infrastructure provision, and I am particularly grateful to be able to support this important motion moved by the member for Grayndler. I am passionate about infrastructure, and to this extent I am pleased that our Prime Minister wishes to be known as the 'infrastructure Prime Minister', although this does seem to be something of a vain hope with regard to his form. This is a government that says one thing and then does another, and that is clearly demonstrated at the heart of this debate by its rhetorical claim going to the bill that is the subject of this motion—that is, the claim that it would strengthen Infrastructure Australia when its entire concept is to do the reverse. Labor is the party of nation building; it is what we do. From the Fisher government and the aged care pension through to Medicare, through to superannuation and, indeed, the National Broadband Network.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
On the National Broadband Network, we are the party of infrastructure, the party of building the future—investing and improving the circumstances in which people work and live their lives; through building a stronger and more productive national economy. Labor in government turned around infrastructure neglect. We were 20th of the 25 OECD nations in terms of infrastructure investment when we came to government in 2007, the government preceding us being one in which our current Prime Minister was a senior minister, along with the Deputy Prime Minister, the now Minister for Infrastructure—but perhaps more on his contribution later. We are now first on the list of infrastructure investment, but sadly it seems not for long. As Paul Keating said:

When you change the government, you change the country

In terms of major infrastructure decision making this is perhaps doubly true. These changes will have a lasting impact. So much for the concerns expressed for intergenerational equity by members opposite, especially for those who live in our major cities and their outer suburbs. On the other hand Labor has shown itself to be committed to an evidence based approach to shaping how we will live and work—more productively, more sustainably—and to building stronger communities. For these purposes Labor, when they were in government, established Infrastructure Australia as a major priority, and supported this body. Under Minister Albanese, the member for Grayndler—a minister committed to the infrastructure agenda—we did not just get Infrastructure Australia to audit our infrastructure needs; we funded those projects. We listened to the experts, or the 'so called experts' in the words of the member for Hughes, and then responded.

On the other hand, our current Prime Minister wrote in his book *Battlelines* of 'kings in their cars'. This perhaps sums up this governments approach to this debate, a triumph of the 'I reckon' school of public policy making—working hand in hand with its two coalition parties; the ideologically blinkered who simply cannot abide public transport; and the National Party, the party that brought us the regional rorts. This is a world view of haves and have-nots, for there to be kings in their cars there must also be serfs; those in public transport it appears are condemned to be second-class citizens.

Since the last election things have changed for the worse. I refer members opposite to the abolition of the Major Cities Unit, and the apparent end of the National Urban Policy Forum—I say apparent, because we do not know the future of this important body. This is not only a government that is allergic to independent expert advice but one that was addicted to secrecy. This debate today brings these two unfortunate traits together. It was timely that I received Infrastructure Australia's *Urban transport strategy* document in the mail last week; and I hope members opposite have read it carefully, including the member for Corangamite. It sets out well the challenges of an urban transport infrastructure strategy, as well as reminding us of the reason for increases in public transport patronage, and concerns in transport equity, it states that we must:

Recognise that the Commonwealth has a role in influencing the quality of planning in our major cities, investing in urban transport infrastructure, and encouraging a consistent national approach to decisions on urban transport.

If only. I remind members opposite of the Melbourne Metro project, so important that people right across the city are crying out for increased capacity in our rail network, including patrons on the South Morang and Hurstbridge lines. There is a better way. *(Time expired)*
Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (11:27): The Infrastructure Australia Amendment Bill will strengthen the role of Infrastructure Australia. It will make Infrastructure Australia independent and transparent, and these are important principles of government about which Labor should be concerned—and clearly we are seeing Labor is not concerned. It is disappointing that the member for Grayndler, in moving this motion, cannot see the wood from the trees when it comes to these important principles.

Infrastructure Australia's current governance structure inhibits its independence in their advice to governments. The direct line of reporting, between the Infrastructure Coordinator and the minister, places significant power in the hands of one person, rather than the Infrastructure Australia Council. Infrastructure Australia was largely answerable to one person, the former infrastructure minister, the member for Grayndler. No wonder he is opposing these changes. Reshaping Infrastructure Australia as an independent statutory authority, governed by a board, with a CEO who reports to the board, enhances the governance of this organisation. The proposal by the member for Grayndler that this bill be referred to a House of Representatives standing committee is futile and obstructive. As the member should know, the bill is already before the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, which is due to report on 17 March.

Our bill also ensures that infrastructure projects are prioritised according to their capacity to contribute to improved productivity. This is so important for our nation and this is one element of our changes which is advancing the cause of the national interest. As the Deputy Prime Minister pointed out just this week, Labor's road and rail funding projects, its wasteful response to the global financial crisis and its infrastructure election promises were all announced without being fully assessed by Infrastructure Australia. Labor completely sidelined proper process. It made a mockery of the organisation that it itself established. We heard from the member for Scullin on the NBN, a $78 billion white elephant which has become an absolute basket case under Labor. And guess what: one of our biggest infrastructure projects in this nation was never referred to Infrastructure Australia.

Our focus on economic growth and productivity is critical. This helps our cities and regions to grow and prosper. Yes, the Prime Minister is proudly 'Australia's infrastructure Prime Minister'. In my electorate there is a powerhouse of major infrastructure projects underway, in partnership with the Victorian government. There is the $171 million duplication of the Princes Highway between Waurn Ponds and Winchelsea. The planning is underway, and we have brought forward some money in the budget for the $515 million duplication of the next section of this road, from Winchelsea to Colac. Work on the $4.8 billion regional rail link is well underway, and that is going to be a great boon for commuters in my region, in Geelong.

Of course, there are two critical infrastructure projects in my region which Labor is very unfortunately opposing. The first is our $50 million upgrade of the Great Ocean Road—an iconic road that is so critical for jobs, for tourism and for our regional economy. This road is the centrepiece of our regional tourism industry, which is contributing $2.1 billion to the Australian economy, something that Labor does not seem to be too concerned about. We are proudly starting to deliver on this project. The other critical project for our region is the East West Link. Our government has committed $1.5 billion. Stage 1 of this project will create more than 3,200 jobs during construction and, for the several thousand people of my electorate who commute to Melbourne each day, this will put an end to the highway that
becomes a car park in many places during peak hour. It is another critically important infrastructure project for our region.

Our government is proudly delivering $342 million in the Community Development Grants Program and we are rolling out our National Stronger Regions Fund—$200 million a year for five years. This shows an unbelievable commitment to the regions, particularly in relation to community infrastructure. We are very proud of our commitments to infrastructure.

Debate adjourned.

Small Business

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (11:33): I move:

That this House:

(1) commends the Government for its strong commitment to small businesses in Australia;

(2) notes:

(a) small business is essential to the Australian Economy;
(b) there are approximately 2 million actively trading small businesses in Australia employing 4.6 million people;
(c) small businesses generate over $900 billion in income and contribute around 34 per cent of Industry Value Added;
(d) under the previous Labor Government, 412,000 jobs were lost in small business and there are 3,000 fewer employing small businesses than was the case when the former Coalition Government left office; and
(e) the share of employment provided by small businesses has shrunk from 53 per cent of the private sector workforce in 2007 to 43 per cent under the former Labor Government; and

(3) supports small business owners throughout Australia by endorsing the Coalition's Small Business Policy that outlines 23 initiatives to further remove challenges and roadblocks in their way.

It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on this motion in relation to small business—part of the engine room of our economy. This motion seeks to commend the coalition government for its strong commitment to small business in Australia. It also notes that small business is essential to the Australian economy. There are approximately two million actively trading small businesses in Australia employing some 4.6 million people. In addition, small businesses generate over $900 billion in income and contribute some 34 per cent of industry value-added.

It also notes that under the previous Labor government 412,000 jobs were lost in the small business sector and there are now some 3,000 fewer employing small businesses than was the case when the Howard government left office. The share of employment provided by small businesses has shrunk from 53 per cent of the private sector workforce in 2007 to 43 per cent under the former Labor government. The motion also notes the support of small business owners throughout Australia by endorsing the coalition's small business policy, which outlines some 23 initiatives to further remove the challenges and roadblocks in their way.

Since the election, the general consensus in the electorate of Forde within our small business sector is that, for the first time in many years, the future is starting to look brighter. My conversations with local small business owners, whether I am at the local chamber of commerce or out in the electorate, are becoming increasingly positive. Yet they are frustrated at the continual blockage of legislation that will help them grow and build their business by
the former government and their allies the Greens in the Senate. You can see the early signs of restoration in business confidence after years of decay and neglect. Small business owners in Forde are beginning to feel optimistic again. They can see that they finally have a government that takes their contribution to our economy seriously. As I mentioned previously, small businesses generate over $900 billion in income and contribute around 34 per cent of industry value-added.

In Forde, small business is the primary employer of our local workforce; it is the engine room of our local economy. Since coming into government, we have actioned a number of items from the policies that we took to the election to ensure this sector is given the critical support it needs to thrive and prosper. We have appointed a small business minister in cabinet and moved small business from Industry to Treasury. We have moved to protect the privacy of home-based businesses on the business names register and implemented a dedicated small business support line with Fair Work Australia. We have begun the process of a root and branch review of the competition laws, with the release of draft terms of reference. In the House we have passed legislation to remove the pay clerk burden from the Paid Parental Leave scheme for employers, but as with many things this is being held up in the Senate by Labor's go-slow. We have passed legislation to remove the carbon tax and introduced new assistance measures for small businesses affected by natural disasters in the form of concessional loans of up to $100,000 which will be administered by state and territory governments.

Work has also commenced with the states to build the roads of the 21st century, because people do not want to spend their lives sitting in cars backed up on highways—especially not self-employed business people who spend 12-hours-plus a day running their businesses. In Forde, the M1 from Loganholme to Daisy Hill is a car park during peak hours. I will continue to push for a resolution to this issue for my community.

Unfortunately, as we reflect on this and many other things, I think we need to remember that the previous Labor government's wasteful spending—resulting in $123 billion in accumulated budget deficits over the forward estimates, with gross debt heading towards $667 billion—means that it is going to be very difficult to find funding to fix these problems. But least with the new government there is now some hope as we seek to get the books back into order.

One of the biggest issues in the Forde electorate is the need for an upgrade to the overpass on the M1 at Exit 54 in Upper Coomera. What can be a 10-minute trip for some residents can take up to 40 minutes during the peak hour. A couple of weeks ago I had a number of meetings with local business people in that community. They are also complaining about that traffic issue, as it is significantly affecting productivity and their ability to get to jobs quickly and efficiently. Whilst there is no immediate commitment from the government on these projects, as with the M1, I am intent on seeking a resolution to these issues on behalf of my electorate until they are resolved.

We do, however, have a commitment to reduce the compliance burden on small business by cutting overall costs to business of existing regulations by at least $1 billion each year. It is pleasing to note that this is being assisted by local councils such as the Logan City Council, who are making great strides in reducing red tape hurdles for new development projects.
On the topic of burdening small business, we have already passed legislation in the house to remove Labor's crippling carbon tax—yet again held up in the Senate by Labor's go-slow. Small business was not able to pass on the cost of the carbon tax as easily as big business and trading conditions have been tough enough without the increased costs of the carbon tax that compound along the supply chain. I have previously shared an example of the cost impost on electricity alone for one of my local businesses. A commercial drycleaner in my electorate, Aarons Linen in Meadowbrook, faced an increase in their electricity spend after the carbon tax was introduced and had to find close to an additional $100,000 per year. On the subject of improving the cost of running a business, the coalition has pledged to reduce the company tax rate by 1.5 per cent from 1 July 2015. All of these moves are part of our Real Solutions plan to create one million new jobs over five years.

In September last year, it was reported by the ABS that local unemployment figures in Forde had reached 6.32 per cent, which was up from 6.17 per cent in June 2013. So I am very pleased to be part of a government that seeks to create new jobs for our local communities with more opportunities for work, not just for the monetary reasons but also for the sense of satisfaction and personal pride for people who are able to work and contribute to our society.

Two years ago, a local causeway in my electorate suffered damage to its foundations from flooding. The local community were impacted by lengthy delays, as the causeway was reduced to one lane while a new causeway was being built. During this time, I had the opportunity to meet with the company that was constructing the new causeway and to seek information as to what options there would be in terms of the repair of the bridge but, more importantly, the options for local businesses to take part in that rebuilding project. I was surprised to hear that local small businesses in the construction and engineering industry, despite their attempts to jump through the various hoops of the onerous tendering processes, were unable to secure a government contract directly. The coalition understand small business, and we know they face significant obstacles in securing government contracts. Tender documents and accompanying obligations, including requirements to have very expensive insurance, can be overly complex and impose barriers for small businesses, including in my electorate, to secure government contracts. The coalition seeks to improve small business access to Commonwealth contracts and will commit $3 million towards the implementation of this initiative designed to actively encourage small-business participation in this area.

As I mentioned earlier, we have outlined some 23 initiatives to strengthen the small businesses sector in Australia. For businesses to thrive, their customers need to feel safe and confident about the future ahead. Forde remains one of the fastest growing regions in South-East Queensland and it has often been overlooked. But, under this government, a number of commitments have been made to achieve better outcomes for our local businesses.

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

**Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (11:43):** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (11:43):** I would love to be able to stand up here today and support a motion by a government which pats itself on the back for its support for small business! I would love to be able to do that because I would actually love it to be true. If I thought it was true, as a person who ran my own small business and then ran a trade association for small business for nearly seven years I would love to be able to do that. But,
unfortunately, as in so many areas for this government, the rhetoric is profoundly different from the reality.

This notion, this statement that we keep hearing over and over again, about the Abbott government being the government for small business is a fraud. The member for Forde confirmed that in the last lines of his contribution today. He talked about the 23 initiatives of the government. The government has been in office for six months, and the only delivery that he could mention today was improving privacy for the business names register. That is a register, by the way, which used to be six registers until quite recently—until the Labor government combined them into one, significantly reducing the red tape and cost burden for small business. The improvement to privacy is a very important improvement made by the government, but that is it. The rest of what the member for Forde talked about today, particularly at the end, was about commitments: ‘We've made commitments to the electorate of Forde.’ But let us look at what they have actually done.

The member for Forde talked about the concessional loans for businesses affected by the natural disaster—the fires in the Blue Mountains that happened just after the election. On this side of the House we screamed as loud as we could about those concessional loans, because in October, November and December they still did not exist. Businesses were struggling in the Blue Mountains through October, November and December after one of the worst natural disasters they had seen in that region. A nice promise—no delivery.

Ms OWENS: The member is saying it is all the state government's fault. Do not pretend to be the government, do not pretend you can do it, if you are not going to deliver it. In December the website for the relevant agency suddenly announced that the concessional loans would be available. In late January small business in the Blue Mountains still had not been told. The paperwork for them to actually get the loans still did not exist. So the member for Forde is true when he says: we will deliver concessional loans. Six months after coming to government and some six months after a disaster—just up the road from me—they will, when they get around to it, actually deliver concessional loans.

Let us look at their complete lack of action on assistance for small business affected by the closure of major manufacturers. We are likely to see tens of thousands of small manufacturers and small businesses go out of business because of the closure of those major manufacturers. We have not heard a word from this government—which professes to be all about small business—about what assistance it is going to give those small businesses to transition in this incredibly important time.

Let us look at the abolition of the instant tax write-off—a $3.2 billion slug on the tax bill of small businesses in this country through three actions, including the abolition of the loss carry-back scheme as of July last year, even though the legislation is not through the parliament yet. The government has not told anyone about it, and when this legislation does go through it will retrospectively change it. There are businesses now that are going about their business, with their financial plans and their investment plans done for the year on the basis of existing tax law, and the government, which is going to slug them with a $3.2 billion extra tax bill, has not bothered to tell them. The instant tax write-off is incredibly important. It was asked for by the Henry tax review, because, if you have had anything to do with small business, you will know that the depreciation schedules for small business are incredibly
difficult. This measure actually allows a small business to claim an instant tax write-off for every asset worth less than $6,500, which means your new fridge, your new desks or your new computers. Then, of course, there is the tax write-off of $5,500 for vehicles. These are gone as of 1 January, even though the legislation is not through the parliament yet and even though there has been no attempt by the government to tell small business that this $3.2 billion slug is on its way for them—not a word from the government that professes to be for small business.

Let us look at the government walking away from the National Food Plan. This one has not had much coverage yet. The food plan that was introduced by Labor last year was absolutely welcomed by the agricultural sector, particularly the food processing sector. It looked at the whole agricultural sector from farm to plate and had a very strong strategy for developing those incredibly important food processing elements of the industry, which are growth areas—gone completely.

The agricultural white paper deals with farm gate profitability. The small business sector in agriculture is on its own, just like the small business sector that supports vehicle manufacturing and our major manufacturers and just like the small business sector in the Blue Mountains that was promised concessional loans. The government are still promising to deliver them at some point, six months later. This is a government with amazing rhetoric and an appalling reality.

Let us look at the government's plans for deregulation—the hoax of a repeal day that we are going to see coming up in the next month or so. In most cases, it is going to repeal regulation which is redundant and has no effect on anything, and we know that absolutely.

We also know that there are a couple of things that this government has in their sights for small business that will be incredibly damaging for small business. They are not out there consulting with small business; small business is not at the table on this like they promised. The government promised to have small business the table. We have not heard a word from the small business minister and certainly, from my conversations with business, there has been no attempt whatsoever to talk to them.

The first one is the Aussie jobs act. The member for Forde talked about how important it is for small business to get access to government contracts. The Howard government did nothing for 13 years on that. We did a great deal. We dramatically increased the number of small businesses that accessed government contracts. But there is another area: the commercial contracts—the $300 billion worth of building that is in the pipeline at the moment on major, mainly resource, projects through this country. The Aussie jobs act requires that a project which is worth more than $500 million have a strategy in place to share some of the work with Australian businesses. This government plans to abolish the Aussie jobs act. This government—which supposedly cares about small business, which has this plan in place and which is likely to do it next March—has not consulted with small business or invited them to the table and is about to do something that will shut out Australian businesses from one of the biggest booms we have seen in a long time.

Mr Van Manen interjecting—

Ms OWENS: If the member genuinely thinks that they are already shut out then perhaps, instead of abolishing the Aussie jobs act—which actually improves their ability—he could
come up with an idea and implement it instead of walking into this House and saying, 'We've made commitments. We're really good for small business. Six months into government I've made commitments to the people of Forde'. You won; you are the government. It is about time you started delivering. We delivered more than you without the numbers, in a hung parliament. We had to negotiate every single piece of legislation through a whole range of different people to get anything through this House, and we managed to do it. The excuses that this government is coming up with for why it is all words and no action are truly appalling.

Let us look at the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal, which is also in the sights of this government. The tribunal helps to ensure that owner-drivers, who incidentally are small businesses in every sense of the word, can be paid a rate which allows them to pay off their truck and drive it safely. They can insure, register and maintain their truck, and they can drive reasonable hours.

We all know, because we have seen the stories—the stories about a number of large retailers in particular—that the rates being paid to drivers without that protection are going down and down and that we are seeing ever more trucks on the road which are unsafe and that drivers are driving for far too long. It is an incredibly important piece of regulation for the small business sector and, once again, it is gone. Where is the consultation? Where is this promise that small business would be at the table? Maybe that is a commitment like all the other commitments. Maybe it is a commitment which says: 'At some point maybe you will be at the table, but not when this incredibly important piece of legislation goes before this House and certainly not in the lead up to it.'

This is an incredible hoax being perpetrated by this government—a government that six months in has not delivered anything worth talking about for small business and yet persists in propagating this myth that they are the government of small business.

**Mr LAUNDY** (Reid) (11:53): That was quite an interesting tirade by the member for Parramatta. I will pay it the relevance it deserves. I rise in support of the member for Forde—I know the work he does in his electorate—and in support of the minister. Small business does have a real and passionate voice now, and it is around the cabinet table. The way that the Minister for Small Business and the cabinet run this process has been, to me as a new member, revealing and so pleasing because it is consultative. As much as the member for Parramatta would like to tell you that small business does not have a voice at the table, our job as local members is to be the voice talking to the minister—we are their voice. So it is a pleasure to rise to speak here.

I would probably change the wording of the motion just slightly from that of the member for Forde: they are not only essential, they are the backbone of our economy. We have an employment problem right now that will not be solved by government, that will not be solved by big business or unions. It will be solved by this vital part. What the member for Parramatta—who claims that we have had six months and that we are a government of talk and no action—failed to mention at any time is that her government's results are there for all to see. Under the previous Labor government—I note she did not address this at all—412,000 jobs were lost in this sector. Our job is to listen and plug in.

I would like to add to the words of the member for Forde about the role in all of this of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Ministers and our role, which is to feed in to him. I will
not reiterate all of his wonderful points. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister has been given the role of reducing red tape and regulation. I note that the member for Parramatta conveniently made reference to 26 March, which is our first omnibus repeal—our regulation abolition day, if you like. The 8,000 pieces that we will abolish that day are not enough. In fact, they are nearly one-third of the 21,000 regulations that the Labor government put in during the previous six years.

Today, my role as a backbencher is, as it should always be, to challenge the ministers of the day, the ministers of this government, to do more. It is one thing to talk about red tape; it is another thing to demonstrate what it actually is. I am going to tell you a story about the day that rolled oats became a dangerous chemical. The chemicals in this country come under three jurisdictions: the Therapeutic Goods Administration, the TGA; the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, the APVMA; and the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme, the NICNAS. This crosses the ministries of health, agriculture and small business. If we are to be serious as a government about reducing red tape, we need to look at the role that departments and cross-ministerial borders play. Cost-recovery models, such as those we see in the TGA, APVMA and NICNAS, do not sit on budgets; they recover the costs. It is an impost passed onto small business. My challenge today to the ministers of this government is to work together across borders, to consolidate these departments, to have them working consultatively with business. I will give you the best example. A chemical brought into Australia, if it comes from the US or the UK, has to go through a process which costs around $100,000, when it has already gone through this process in a jurisdiction that, I am sure you would admit, is like our own. This same thing happened with NICNAS. A cosmetic company wanted to put out a pack for kids, which included a packet of rolled oats. In this jurisdiction, if cosmetic companies are putting out a pack they have to put everything through NICNAS. NICNAS did not have a classification for this and wrote the following: 'Thank you for your letter regarding the proposed introduction of steamed rolled oats in a children's activity cosmetic toy kit. NICNAS considers that steamed rolled oats does not meet the definition of naturally occurring chemical. Steamed rolled oats will therefore meet the definition of a new industrial chemical.' Thus ruling out and sending the company elsewhere to try and gain approval. This is an example of how silly red tape and regulation is.

Through the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, reporting directly to the Prime Minister and the wonderful ministers of the Crown, this government stands committed to getting behind small business. I know they will. It is an honour to rise again in support of this motion and stand for small business.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (11:58): I am always thankful of any opportunity to talk about small business, because it really is the engine room and the backbone of the Australian economy. While this is a good motion, it does not tell you the difference between the actual record of Labor in government and what the Liberal-National Party coalition government is actually doing. The coalition needs to seriously reflect on this motion, given the actions that the government has already taken. What has it done to date? Its commitment to small business from 1 January 2014 has been to take away, rip out, $4 billion of direct tax assistance from small businesses. This is not how you help small business.
Under Labor, you could immediately write-off each business related asset costing less than $6½ thousand. This was much appreciated and much taken up by the small business community because it was direct assistance. Under Tony Abbott and Bruce Billson, this has been reduced, from 1 January this year, to just $1,000. That will hurt small business. Under Labor, small business could claim up to $5,000 as an immediate deduction for a new or used motor vehicle. This has been completely scrapped by this new government. So while we go and help small business directly—not just talk about it, but actually do something directly—this government talks about helping small business but actually takes the assistance away.

These two initiatives for small business and sole traders alone were introduced to help with cash flow, which, if anyone who understands small business knows, is one of the main issues that affects small business. It is not just me saying this. The Australian Industry Group said that the small business asset write-off threshold should not be reduced from $6,500 to $1,000, because it would add an extra administrative burden. So this is a government that is adding burdens according to AiG. The so-called savings to the budget of this repeal are $2.9 billion, but it is $2.9 billion levied on small business. You are taking it away from small business. How does that help small business? Tell those 2.7 million small businesses how charging them more helps them.

There was an even better one that we put in place; it was the first time in Australian history that we had the tax loss carry-back. We had recognised, when talking to small business, that there ought to be an opportunity for them to claim losses back on tax that they had already paid if they made losses in a particular year during difficult times. That was the first time that was ever done. It was really well taken up and was worth $950 million. It meant that today a small business could get a cash rebate from the government on tax paid in the past. This was something that small business understood and appreciated. They understood it to the value of nearly a billion dollars. That is how much they understood and how much they valued it. Across the country, 110,000 small businesses made use of this Labor initiative that has now been taken away by Tony Abbott and Bruce Billson. So, again, while they talk about being a friend of small business and helping them, what they actually do in action is the exact opposite. Peter Anderson of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the tax loss carry-back and the instant asset write-off were also recognised as very good stimulus measures for small business. Again, that is another person backing Labor in terms of our record.

Rather than just the rhetoric we hear from the other side, the facts are that Labor has a great record in government supporting the engine room of the Australian economy—small business, including sole traders. For the record, because you will hear in this place that somehow under us there were less small businesses or less people being employed, as at June 2009 there were a bit over two million actively trading businesses in Australia, and that rose to 2.14 million as at June 2012. The number went up, activity went up and small businesses prospered under Labor.

In fact, when it comes to employment under us, the unemployment rate was always a little bit too high I thought but around 5.5 to 5.7 per cent. What we are seeing under the Liberal government is unemployment hitting six per cent for the first time in a decade, and that will go to 6¼ per cent. While we may have forecasted that, there is a simple thing to understand here: Tony Abbott said, 'If we get into government, we'll do a better job.' If you are just going
to say, 'We'll just keep whatever Labor had in place,' then you are supposed to be doing a better job. The facts will always remain that under us unemployment was lower and that under you unemployment is higher. They are just indisputable facts.

Labor also introduced the national system for registering business names, which was one of the most time and money saving and cost-effective measures you could put in place. We also streamlined the business reporting requirements. We introduced the R&D tax offset for small business, the prompt payment protocol and the Wein review looking at the franchising sector to make sure there was a balance. I applaud any motion that highlights the issues of small business, especially if it gives me the opportunity to talk about the positive things that Labor did in government. We did things; you just talk them.

Debate adjourned.

**Cambodia**

Ms O’NEIL (Hotham) (12:04): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that in July 2013, general elections were held in Cambodia, the results of which have been disputed and led to civil unrest;

(2) notes that on 2 and 3 January 2014:

(a) 5 people were killed by Cambodian security forces while protesting in Phnom Penh; and

(b) 23 people were detained for participating in protests to secure a better wage for garment workers; and

(3) calls on the Australian Government to:

(a) join human rights organisations and multinational business leaders to express deep concern over the actions of the Cambodian Government;

(b) condemn violence against protesters; and

(c) ask the Cambodian authorities to release those detained for social and political activism.

I rise today in sadness and in anger to express my deep concern about recent human rights abuses in Cambodia, and I ask today that the Australian government join me in speaking out against recent actions of the Cambodian government. We condemn violence against protesters. We ask that Cambodian authorities release those detained for social and political activism. We ask for a Cambodia free of corruption and a democratic Cambodia free of violence.

I do so on behalf of all of my constituents in Hotham, because we have the great privilege of sharing our home with so many Cambodian-Australians. There are about 11,000 Cambodians living in Victoria, and 2,000 of them have made their home in my electorate of Hotham. It is a community with driven, passionate leaders who are engaged in political life both here and back at home in Cambodia—leaders such as Hong Lim MP, the member for Clayton and very proudly Australia’s first Cambodian-born member of parliament; Councillor Youhorn Chea, a community hero and City of Greater Dandenong councillor and former mayor; and Councillor Meng Heang Tak, a young leader who is already a respected and distinguished person and is just starting out his journey as a councillor with the City of Greater Dandenong. They are representative of so many other leaders, some of who are joining us here today in the chamber from Cambodian associations from around Hotham and beyond.
We are also very lucky to benefit from the spiritual guidance and leadership of monks from
the significant temples in my electorate of Hotham: Wat Buddharangsi in Clarke Road, the
Khmer Buddhist Centre of Victoria on Springvale Road and the Dhammaram temple in
Balmoral Avenue. I want to pay my respects to those religious leaders who are represented
here in the chamber today. Soum swa-khom—welcome to our parliament.

For Australia, Cambodia is a neighbour but, more than that, a friend. We have welcomed
Cambodians to our country since the 1970s and have welcomed people to build new lives
here. We enjoy a strong trading relationship, and the relationship between Australia and
Cambodia is really that of a genuine friendship. In such a friendship you can have frank
discussions, and that is what I want to do today.

In July 2013 a general election was held in Cambodia. There was a fear that those elections
would not be fair—a fear founded quite reasonably on the unwillingness of the Cambodian
government to implement the recommendations on corruption and electoral fraud of the
United Nations special rapporteur in 2012, and the fact that Sam Rainsy, Cambodia's
opposition leader, was not given free rights to stand in that election. Concerns about the
election process quickly turned to civil unrest, and perhaps the most shocking incident
occurred in January, when we saw garment workers shot and imprisoned simply for
participating in protests demanding a higher wage. Five people were killed, 23 were arrested
and assembly was banned.

Recently I was lucky to join the shadow minister for foreign affairs and Deputy Leader of
the Opposition, the member for Sydney; and the shadow Attorney-General and member for
Isaacs to speak with Professor Gareth Evans. Professor Evans is a legend in this place and has
a significant and longstanding history with Cambodia. Professor Evans indicated—in private,
but also in his public statements on this matter—that enough is enough. In a recent newspaper
article he said:

There is a place for quiet diplomacy that relies on quiet engagement to encourage significant
behavioural change. But when states behave badly enough for long enough, loud megaphones can also
be in order.'

So what has our government's response been? Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has been
conspicuously silent on these points. She has failed to mention these terrible abuses on her
visit to Cambodia, focusing instead on negotiating a new asylum seeker agreement. And it
does make one wonder: is the silence strategic? What else could possibly explain turning a
blind eye to this conduct?

The loud megaphone broadcasting our condemnation is in order, and we call on the
government to voice Australia's deep concerns at the situation in Cambodia, because I have
sat with Cambodian leaders and felt their agony while they have told me about abuses in their
home country. I was appalled to hear their concerns about the electoral process; I was
horrified to learn that there was a ban on assembly; and I was sickened and saddened to hear
that citizens were shot dead. The actions were unacceptable. They were unacceptable by
Australian standards, they were unacceptable by the standards of the Cambodian community
and they were unacceptable to my constituents in Hotham.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Porter): The chamber requires a seconder for the motion.

Ms Plibersek: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.
Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Chief Government Whip) (12:09): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this issue, and I am delighted to be able to speak in front of a number of Khmer who have successfully settled in Australia and made a very significant contribution to this nation over a long period of time. My engagement with Cambodia goes back a long way. I had the opportunity in 1985 of visiting Cambodia, at a time when the nation had suffered dreadfully as a result of the activities of the Khmer Rogue. I can remember Phnom Penh when I was there, largely devoid of Khmer people. There was a government installed by Vietnam. Hun Sen was there; the Vietnamese were there; the Russians were there—it was a city devoid of Khmer. I have had the opportunity of meeting those who were in government, as well as those who were in opposition, and many of them I regard as my friends. I cannot say Hun Sen is a close friend—I have only met him once or twice—but Sam Rainsy I had the opportunity of meeting on several occasions.

Most Australians look at Asian democracies and they are not all the same as ours. It does not matter whether you are talking about Vietnam or China, or even countries closer to us. Some people will say that we do not always understand Asian culture. I would like to think that Asian culture reflected the democracy that I know, but in many respects that has not been part of their heritage. When I look at the way in which events have unfolded, I understand that Cambodia is very much what I would regard as a one-party state, with the CPP being in government for such a long period of time. I understand that elections are held, and they do not always look the same as ours. I witnessed some of those early elections, like Gareth Evans, very much aware of the need to try and promote the sorts of values that we see as being important.

As is recorded in the motion, I very much lament that you can have elections in which people who believe that they are participating lose their lives. We have to ask ourselves what is the best and most appropriate way forward. For us, in relation to countries within our region, we have endeavoured to have dialogue with them about the way in which you can produce change, the way in which you can obtain better human rights outcomes. With China, with Vietnam, we have human rights dialogues. Whether we should have dialogues with other countries in the region is a matter that, no doubt, consideration will be given to in the future.

The view of the Australian government is that we want to see democracy working. We want to see all parties able to exercise restraint, to work through issues, to have effective dialogue. Having played a role in the negotiation of the Paris peace accords in 1991, and having been a long supporter of the democratisation progress in Cambodia, Australia wants to see that this continues to develop and we want to play a positive role in rebuilding Cambodian society and its infrastructure to meet its future needs. The government is concerned about the deaths and injuries that have occurred but continues to urge all parties to exercise restraint and to work these issues through in open dialogue. We do have a strong and growing bilateral relationship with contemporary Cambodia—the Foreign Minister recently visited there—and we will remain actively engaged in working these issues through in the future.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12:14): I rise to associate myself with the motion put by the member for Hotham. The member for Hotham first raised with me the issue of what is happening in Cambodia very soon after her election to this place. Of course, she is not the only one to do so: the member for Bruce will be speaking on this motion a little later. The members for Isaacs and Fowler will not be able to speak today, but I
know they also feel very strongly about this issue, as do many other Australian parliamentarians. The reason is that Australia has very longstanding and close relations with Cambodia, stretching back decades. Australia has seen Cambodia as a friend for a long time. Our involvement in the peace process in the eighties and nineties, under the leadership of then Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, was a very important time for us. Gareth Evans has often been described as the architect of the Cambodian peace plan. Indeed, in 1994, Chea Vun, who is now a senior lawmaker in the Cambodian government, went further and described Gareth Evans as 'the father of Cambodia'.

The peace plan followed two decades of violence involving foreign actors, including the United States, Vietnam, civil war, bombing and the Khmer Rouge genocide that shocked the world. We had a role, indeed a lead role, in the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia. We also accepted, as the member for Hotham has said, many Cambodian migrants and refugees, who have greatly enriched our country and add a unique and distinct flavour to our multicultural society.

Following the 1991 Paris peace agreements, hopes were high that the people of Cambodia would finally have peace, democracy and human rights. Indeed, Australian Lieutenant General John Sanderson led a force comprising 46 countries to supervise the ceasefire. Those hopes were boosted by the peaceful election in 1993, but unfortunately the path since then has at times been very rocky.

In March 1997 an attack on an opposition rally killed 16 people and injured hundreds, and in July that year there was a bloody coup in which opponents were reportedly tortured and executed. The international community, perhaps desensitised after many decades of Cambodian suffering following the Khmer Rouge atrocities, did not speak out loudly enough at the time. Since then, we have seen human rights and democracy continue to flounder. Last year, there was deadly violence against unarmed people protesting against the national election, which some have described as a deeply flawed national election. In January this year, five striking garment workers were shot dead by security forces and others were seriously injured by gunfire. More than 20 workers were detained without trial. Additionally, there have been disturbing reports of racially-motivated violence against the ethnic Vietnamese population, and the main opposition leader has been accused of inciting racism.

As Gareth Evans writes in his op-ed in *The Australian* today, which has also been published around the world, the human rights abuses have gone hand-in-hand with corruption. Out of 177 countries, Cambodia is ranked 160th by Transparency International. There have been allegations that those close to the government, around 20 people, have amassed fortunes of around $1 billion through illegal means. There has been a high level of political patronage, with the government reportedly having 244 ministers and secretaries of state. Given how poor Cambodia is, this type of behaviour is inexcusable.

There is, of course, hope: for all its flaws, Cambodia's opposition is described as 'increasingly credible'; thousands of social media savvy young voters have been demanding change in Cambodia; and international pressure is also building by many states, by putting their criticisms on the record when the United Nations Human Rights Council reviewed Cambodia's human rights record in February.

We believe that it is very important for the Australian government to also voice its concerns loudly and clearly. Because of our long and close friendship with Cambodia,
Australia is almost uniquely placed amongst the international community to do so. While Foreign Minister Bishop recently met with Cambodia's Prime Minister, our government's muted response to the litany of human rights concerns would disappoint many in the Australian-Cambodian community. Our government's reaction reflects poorly on our commitment to supporting the rights of Cambodians. We need to be firm in our condemnation of violence against protestors and demand the release of political detainees. The ongoing pattern of political violence in Cambodia must stop once and for all, and we should be ready to help the Cambodian government, opposition groups and civil society to construct that much more peaceful society that Cambodians so deserve.

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (12:19): I rise to speak on this motion concerning the ongoing civil unrest in Cambodia that led to the death of five people earlier this year, on 2 and 3 January 2014. While Cambodia has in many respects had remarkable advances over the past 20 years, progress on human rights has been disappointing. Human rights issues in Cambodia are wide ranging and include issues around land disputes, electoral reform, freedom of speech, indiscriminate use of force, the lack of equality before the law, and the lack of independence of the courts and government institutions such as the National Election Committee. I was very honoured to be able to visit a year ago and talk to many officials regarding that range of issues.

Australia continues to monitor the human rights situation in Cambodia and to work constructively with the Cambodian government for the protection of human rights. I note that in a recent article in an online publication, Project Syndicate, published on 26 February, former Labor Minister for Foreign Affairs Gareth Evans argued:

It is time for Cambodia’s political leaders to be named, shamed, investigated, and sanctioned by the international community.

I also note that Mr Evans's article has been picked up by many Australian media outlets. Sadly, Gareth Evans has kept very quiet about Cambodia over the last couple of years and only thought to raise it right now, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, has visited Cambodia. Mr Evans did not bother to raise his concerns with the former foreign minister, Bob Carr, when he visited Cambodia. Then again, Mr Carr spent more time visiting Angkor Wat than he did raising human rights issues with the Cambodian government, which is what he was there for.

Under the guidance of our foreign minister, Hon. Julie Bishop, Australia is in an ongoing dialogue at senior levels of the Cambodian government on human rights issues. We also raise these issues consistently through our embassy in Phnom Penh and in the UN human rights forums. During Minister Bishop's visit to Cambodia on 22 February, she canvassed Cambodia's domestic political situation with her Cambodian counterparts. While ultimately these are matters for the Cambodian people, we must encourage all parties to remain in the dialogue, and to this end Minister Bishop has welcomed their mutual agreement, on 18 February, to hold a national workshop on electoral reform. The Australian government has underlined the importance that we attach to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Indeed, during the minister's visit to Cambodia, on 22 February she raised human rights in each of the meetings with the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the foreign minister for Cambodia—hardly what I would call a 'muted response'.

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FEDERATION CHAMBER
In addition, Minister Bishop reaffirmed Australia's statement at the Universal Periodic Review in Geneva on 28 January. In Australia's UPR statement as of 28 January we did express concerns about restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly and association in Cambodia. We also expressed particular concern about the recent disproportionate violence against protesters and the detention without trial of some of those protesters. We recommended that the government of Cambodia assume full respect, in law and in practice, for the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, consistent with international law. We also recommended that Cambodia establish an independent national human rights institution, as was consistent with the Paris principles. We have heard many speakers here today talk about the Paris principles. But there is a long way to go. Australia stands ready to help in whatever way that we can, to ensure that Cambodia addresses some of these human rights issues in the future. The government is well aware of the circumstances in Cambodia, and Minister Bishop's diligence in having already visited Cambodia, in comprehensively addressing these issues with the Cambodian government, is something that we should commend her on.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (12:24): With due respect to the member for Brisbane, I would like to assure her that my activity on this issue very much predates the change of government. I have been in correspondence with the previous foreign minister about the last elections there, and I have had the opportunity to work with people such as Chhayri Marm, a prominent Cambodian in my electorate; and Narand Kay, a Sydney Khmer broadcaster. I had the opportunity to meet Sam Rainsy, the opposition leader, in my electoral office; to attend a number of fundraisers for the Cambodian National Rescue Party; and to attend with my colleague Chris Hayes rallies at the Cambodian Buddhist monastery about the outcome of the elections.

Clearly, issues relating to Cambodia have been advanced for some quite some years. Global Witness, as early as 2008, stated that it had:

… surveyed the emerging extractive industries … The results were alarming. Patterns of corruption … are now being duplicated … The same political elite who squandered the … timber resources are now responsible for managing its mineral and petroleum wealth.

They commented about the prominence of the head of the armed forces, ministers' brothers, the Prime Minister's cousins, senators, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and wealthy connected tycoons in ripping off the country's extractive and mineral wealth. They noted that the Cambodian National Petroleum Authority was directly under Hun Sen and his deputy, Sok An. So they were expressing doubts back in 2008 about the level of corruption in the country.

What we saw in the elections last year was of great concern. In a fashion that the Cambodian government has utilised on many occasions, it utilised illegal processes to deny the possibility of opposition campaigning. The opposition leader, of course, was severely restricted in his ability to contest those elections. We have a situation where there has been allegations that as many as 1.2 to 1.3 million people were denied their voting rights. There have been claims that the so-called indelible ink that was supplied was actually totally inadequate.

We have had a situation in January this year where police and security forces used live bullets against demonstrators. There was a situation where very aged broadcasters, in their
70s and 80s, have been detained and given long sentences. Also, there has been a situation—
as was noted by previous speaker—where political opposition rallies were attacked quite
some years ago. Of those elections, Transparency International commented in very negative
terms about them, saying that essentially they could not be regarded as legitimate.

In more recent times, we have a situation where the current regime is basically flogging off
the interests of the nation and its people. In the race for the lowest common denominator in
wages and conditions, Chinese, Koreans and Taiwanese companies have established
themselves in the country, and the government has been extremely supportive of their ability
to limit very much trade union activity. Human Rights Watch has commented that basic rights
such as freedom of expression, assembly and association come under regular attack, while
corruption is rampant, severely affecting the enjoyment of basic economic and social rights.
Journalists were attacked in September last year. A trade union leader, Chea Vichea, was
murdered. The regime and its associates attempted to frame a number of individuals—poor
characters who were picked up. They were eventually exonerated. The family has refused
compensation for his death exactly because they say that there has been an attempt to trump
up charges against people who did not actually commit the offence. We also have had a series
of forced evictions as the government and its auxiliaries have supported foreign corporations
in seizing people's lands on behalf of those interests.

I want to say to the member for Brisbane, I have got a track record on this issue and I
resent any kind of allegation that this is in any way manufactured against the current
government. However, it does not give a good impression, despite all these alleged nice little
comments in backrooms about how concerned they are about human rights in Cambodia, that
in the same meetings they say that Cambodia is a suitable settlement place for refugees from
this country. Quite frankly, the human rights situation in Cambodia is disgraceful and it is
disgraceful that the foreign minister goes there and basically says it adequate for people to be
settled there.

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (12:30): I too rise to speak on the
motion brought to this House by Ms O'Neil. In 2008, as a new member, I was privileged to be
part of a United Nations delegation that also included the member for Corio, the member for
Forrest and Senator Siewert, to go to Cambodia and witness the elections in 2008, so I do
have some idea of what is happening there. I was placed in regional Cambodia, at Battambang
in the north-west corner. What has been stated in this place, I did see. Despite the fact that
there was an air of legitimacy about that election, what was happening underneath, in a
subversive way, became obvious to those of us there. So upon return we briefed the then
foreign affairs minister, Stephen Smith, as to what we saw. I will say that I believe that the
Australian government is engaged in the process in Cambodia. In the context of where
Cambodia has come from in one generation, it is quite remarkable, but that undertone of
corruption and intimidation was certainly evident to me.

I would like to comment on the Cambodian people. I was very humbled to make the
acquaintance of many people in Cambodia and to witness the dignity and hard work they have
placed into pulling themselves out of what must have been an incredibly bad time under the
regime of Pol Pot. To lose nearly half your population in a short period of time and to come
back as Cambodia has is truly remarkable.
I condemn the loss of life among the protesters at the garment factories, and I will make some comment on those garment factories. It is easy in Australia for us to look at them as places of exploitation to be condemned, but from what I could see those factories were supplying employment and a regular income to many people who had been displaced from rural Cambodia. To see those people going to work every day in the garment factories, and the dignity with which they carried themselves, was very humbling.

I might touch in the last minute on some of the good work that Australians are doing in Cambodia. There is a young woman from my home town who has started a charity in Cambodia called VOICE. Our guests in the chamber today would know that there are between 10,000 and 20,000 children working on the streets and in bars in Cambodia as we speak. Kristy Fleming and her charity, VOICE, are working with these children to get them off the street, to keep them away from abuse and exploitation and to help them with food, clothes and education. Under VOICE's Children's Communities Cambodia program, they run three community centres which support over 75 vulnerable children and families. She is just a young lady from regional Australia who visited Cambodia and, as I did, fell in love with the people and wanted to do something. Also, over the last few years the Rotary clubs of Dubbo have constructed a school in southern Cambodia that now has 400 students, providing education where previously there was none.

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (12:35): I rise in support of the motion. I think that the entire House is basically in favour of the motion, but we are in a situation where, as is often the case, the argument is: how do you get to the place you need to be, ensuring that—with respect—real action takes place? I would like to commence by acknowledging the representatives of the Cambodian community and venerable monks who are present here in the chamber—I understand they are mainly made up of the Cambodian community in Canberra, but I know that this is an issue of great interest to members of the Cambodian community throughout the nation. I acknowledge also the tremendous migrants they have been in Australia since many of them arrived, in the aftermath of one of the bloodiest conflicts that we have seen in our times—that is, around the questions of Vietnam and the bombing of Cambodia, and beyond that, the civil war and the terrible regime of Pol Pot. I acknowledge that in my local community in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, they have been fine Australians and people that I am proud to count amongst my friends.

The fact that there are so many members of the Cambodian community here today illustrates to the House the grave concerns that are held about what is occurring back in Cambodia. These concerns have been long held, but recent events have brought them to the forefront. I would like to pick up on a couple of the comments made by earlier members. We are seeing a situation now in Cambodia where—after decades of improvement on an economic front, and decades of hope on a political front—things are going backwards. That needs to be understood. The member for Berowra—a member that I have a good deal of respect for on issues of human rights—in his comments mentioned that when we talk about democracy, it is not the same everywhere, and that the circumstances in Asia are different, at times. I agree with him that that is the case, but we have to look at the question of what is taking place there. The recent events in January—around the shooting and detaining of garment workers protesting merely to try and get a reasonable living or subsistence wage—are beyond the pale. They are indicative of what has been occurring in Cambodia over recent
times, when many in the international community have hoped, prayed and worked to see improvements—hopefully along the road to a fuller democracy.

The member for Brisbane made some comments which I would also like to pick up on. It is great that the Minister for Foreign Affairs—according to the member for Brisbane—when she was in Cambodia was raising these issues in discussions with senior figures in the government. That is fantastic and I want to congratulate her on that. I am sorry that we had to hear that here, in this debate, rather than in a statement from the foreign minister. Given the significance of this issue to many people of Cambodian descent in the Australian community, and to all of those who are concerned about human rights in our region, it would have been better if we had heard about it before this debate. But I congratulate the minister that those statements have been made and that those attempts were made while she was there. That is a very good thing.

I would like to pick up on one issue that the member for Parkes raised. He mentioned the question of the garment industry. He said that when he visited Cambodia, he was pleased to see that it provided meaningful work. I agree totally. Meaningful work for meaningful pay is an underlying basis of fair play within our Australian system and across politics. It should be in place throughout the world. Let us not forget the workers who were shot, or the men and women who have been detained for demonstrating for a right that we would see as something we all have, and should have. They were seeking a minimum monthly wage increase from just over $90 per month to just over $112 per month. I do not think anyone could say that that is unreasonable.

I support the motion, because these are issues that need to be raised. I am very pleased that the minister raised these issues while visiting Cambodia. They should be raised again. The time of quiet diplomacy with Cambodia may well be gone. We may need to be more active and more vocal in support of freedom. (Time expired)

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (12:40): I congratulate the member for Hotham for bringing this very important matter to our attention. I also welcome the Australian Cambodian community and venerables who are attending here today. Sadly, the start of 2014 brought more disturbing news from Cambodia with continued harassment of human rights activists and protesters at the hands of their own government and security forces. On 3 January, during a legitimate industrial dispute in support of a minimum wage in the clothing industry, five workers were shot dead in Phnom Penh. Many were injured and many others were beaten by the police and members of the security forces; more than 20 were detained without trial. Understandably, this provoked significant widespread protest on the streets of Phnom Penh; I understand more than 20,000 people marched in protest at these actions. By the way, the protesters were met with the same heavy-handed treatment that, presumably, originated on the orders of the Prime Minister Hun Sen.

These recent incidents are part of a pattern of violence in Cambodia. Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in our region and there are more than 15 million people living with the lasting scars of their painful and brutal past. Under the Khmer Rouge regime of the 1970s, the population were put through some of the worst atrocities known to mankind and genocide saw more than eight million people killed through execution, starvation and forced labour. The promise of lasting peace, which was supposed to come at the end of Pol Pot's regime and the signing of the Paris peace agreement in 1991, was never quite fulfilled for the people of
Since gaining power, the Hun Sen regime has been marred by corruption, violence and systematic human rights abuses. It has only been since the formation of the Cambodia National Rescue Party, led by Sam Rainsy, that there has been a coordinated and plausible opposition to the Hun Sen government. In the elections last July, the Cambodian National Rescue Party doubled its presence in the parliament, gaining 55 seats in a 120-seat parliament. However, following serious allegations of electoral fraud, manipulation of the electoral commission and tight government control of the media, the opposition boycotted the parliamentary sessions in September last year. I met with Sam Rainsy, the leader of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party. As a matter of fact, I met with him twice during his visits to Australia. Last year, in Sydney, we spoke about the effects of the flawed governance and corruption of the current regime, and I heard his concerns and his plans for a future for the Cambodian people. To suppress any threat to its three-decade rule, the Hun Sen administration has instigated court proceedings against Sam Rainsy and his deputy, Kem Sokha, on charges that they have incited crime to undermine public security.

I have spoken on many occasions in this place about the issue of human rights in various parts of the world, including Cambodia, and I will continue to do so because I believe in a society where people's fundamental human rights are respected. Human rights are the inherent privilege that every person is entitled to regardless of their background or where they were born. Given the significant relationship between Australia and Cambodia, I believe Australia has a responsibility to join with the international community in voicing in the strongest possible terms its abhorrence to the continuation of human rights abuses in Cambodia and place appropriate pressure on the Cambodian government to address this dreadful situation.

Australia is a major foreign aid contributor to Cambodia, and our aid should have strings attached; essentially the conditions should be to improve their human rights record. People in Cambodia deserve better than what they have, and they certainly need our support. I would also like to acknowledge Mr Chhayri Marm, President of the Cambodia National Rescue Party in Sydney, one of the most passionate advocates for human rights that I have met, in his tireless work undertaken for his community. I will continue to attend functions with him, and encourage him to continue with his noble work.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (12:45): I would like to congratulate the member for Hotham for bringing forward what I believe is one of the most important motions that we will be discussing in parliament today. I would also like to recognise the members of the Cambodian community and their venerables.

It is a sad and tragic event when workers are killed for demonstrating peacefully to increase the minimum wage, and that is exactly what happened in January; and it is unacceptable. As the previous speakers have pointed out, Cambodian workers are among the lowest paid workers in the world—it was just to increase their wages from a mere $90 a month to $112 a month; that was what they were asking for.

This is a case where workers, who are working in atrocious conditions and get very small wages, have been further victimised. They were killed by Cambodian security forces, and a further 23 were detained for taking part in the protest.
I understand workers were just asking for a very small wage—just over US$100 a month—and that is woefully insufficient to meet the cost of living. We would not accept those conditions in Australia, nor would many other countries around the world.

I have heard the statements that have been made by previous speakers and how they are generally supportive of the workers in Cambodia, but I am disappointed that some of that support did not come out earlier. I would like to acknowledge the human rights organisations and multinational business leaders, and join with them in expressing my deep concerns over the actions of the Cambodia government. I would also like to condemn the violence against the protesters, because violence cannot be accepted as a response to workers fighting for better wages.

I would like to ask the Cambodian government to release those people who are being detained for participating in the protest. It is totally unacceptable that peaceful protesters can be thrown into jail for protesting about better wages.

I would like to say that, while we would all like to have cheaper clothing, we cannot have that at the expense of workers. Sometimes people fail to recognise that we can get cheaper clothes because of the terrible working conditions that these employees were fighting against.

The garment industry is worth about $5 billion in Cambodia each year, and the clothing made for high street brands is the country's largest export. So an industry that provides the country's largest market is refusing to look after workers, and that is compounded by the fact that, when workers went out and protested for higher wages, not only were their demands ignored but the workers were thrown in jail. That is not acceptable. Everybody remembers what happened in Bangladesh in 2013, and we do not want that sort of thing to happen in Cambodia. We would like to support the Cambodian workers. We would like a message to go back to them that we here in the Australian parliament understand the issue of decent pay for a decent day's work. We need to make sure that this happens in Cambodia. We need the Cambodian workers to know that they have the support of us here. Everyone deserves a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, as I have mentioned.

But at this particular time the federal government is asking the Cambodian government to accept asylum seekers on behalf of Australia. This is akin to the Malaysian solution which the former government put forward in 2011, yet the coalition is happy to offer a deal to Cambodia, which has the human rights record that we are talking about today. We want to support you, not exploit you.

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (12:51): I seek leave to speak again without closing the debate.

Leave granted.

Ms O'NEIL: I just want to make a few remarks to finish off the discussion that we are having at this particular moment. I want to thank all of the members who have made a contribution to this very important debate today. We have heard some really strong statements on both sides of the House which have denounced some of what we have seen in Cambodia in recent years. I have mentioned to some of the Cambodian leaders who were here this afternoon that, when I raised this issue first within the Labor side of the House but then more broadly with the parliament, there were genuinely people being turned away because there were so many people who wanted to speak in favour of this very important motion. So I genuinely hope that the Cambodians who are listening—the Cambodians who will see this on
YouTube and other things and, of course, the venerable monks and the other senior Cambodian leaders who have joined us today—feel that the Australian parliament are standing with them as brothers and sisters in this fight for a more democratic world and in particular on the issues that have challenged Cambodia in recent years.

I will just reiterate some of the important points that I have heard today. The first is that we really regard the relationship that we have with Cambodia as a very special relationship. There is nothing quite like the sort of relationship that you can have with a country when so many Cambodians are actually living in Australia or travelling to Australia and when Australians are travelling to Cambodia. There is nothing like that person-to-person connection that makes us feel that we have a strong friendship with your country. It is different to other countries where we might have a bigger or a stronger trading relationship but not that emotional tie. It is important to note that, because the friendship is genuine, and in a genuine friendship you can have a frank conversation about things that are happening in one another's country.

We have heard a lot of very frank comments today about things that have been happening in Cambodia that we are concerned about. We are concerned about issues to do with the running of elections: we know that having a fair electoral system is a genuine bedrock of democracy and we want to make sure that Cambodians are enjoying that most fundamental of elements. We are concerned about industrial issues: we want people in Cambodia to have the right to protest for something as basic as a living wage. Of course, for any country in the world we would be concerned about violence, but particularly in a country like Cambodia, where we have had such a close relationship.

So we have had that frank discussion and we have also heard a little bit of a sense in this Chamber that enough is enough. We have heard a lot about some issues in Cambodia over many years, but all that we have seen in recent times, particularly in January over what happened post the election in July last year, is simply intolerable. It is time for the Australian government to move from its quiet, closed-door statements and its quiet, closed-door discussions with Cambodian leaders to make a strong and powerful show to the world that we do not believe that this is the way things should function in a strong democracy such as we expect Cambodia to transition into.

To the people who are here, I want to say again that we condemn violence against protesters. We ask that the Cambodian authorities release those who have been detained for social and political activism. We will continue to fight for a Cambodia free of corruption—a democratic Cambodia that is free of violence. As I say, we really want to stand with the people present and the Cambodian-Australians who are listening to this debate to commit to working towards that cause with you.

Debate adjourned.

Coeliac Awareness Week

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (12:55): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that:

(a) 13 to 20 March 2014 is national Coeliac Awareness Week, with the aim of increasing rates of testing and diagnosis of coeliac disease;
(b) coeliac disease is one of Australia's most commonly under-diagnosed conditions, with an estimated 80 per cent of sufferers currently not diagnosed; and

(c) diagnosis and treatment immensely improves well-being and quality of life for sufferers of coeliac disease; and

(2) congratulates Coeliac Australia, and its five state organisations, on their work in promoting awareness of the disease, improving quality of life for sufferers, and fundraising for research of coeliac disease.

I rise to speak on this motion in relation to coeliac disease, Coeliac Awareness Week and the wonderful work that is done by Coeliac Australia and its state based organisations in promoting awareness of the disease, improving quality of life for those diagnosed with coeliac disease, and fundraising for research into coeliac disease.

I have spoken in this place previously in relation to coeliac disease, and I did so because of the need to highlight to the community the prevalence, symptoms and management of the disease. Let me start today with some detail about the disease and some known facts. Coeliac disease is an immune based illness caused by gluten, which is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley and oats. Coeliac disease is common; it is estimated that it affects one in 70 Australians. However, recent data shows that the prevalence may be much higher than previously thought, with an estimated 340,000 Australians affected. Unfortunately, 80 per cent, or about 272,000 people, are undiagnosed. This underdiagnosis is due to a number of reasons, including that testing rates are quite low, and they are particularly low for men—and I note that men comprise only one-third of those tested for the disease. Also, the symptoms can be vague, with many people experiencing absolutely no symptoms at all.

Many people with coeliac disease take more than 10 years to be diagnosed, and this certainly needs to be changed. Testing for coeliac disease certainly needs to be done far more frequently, and it needs to be much higher on the agenda for our GPs so that they are actively looking for coeliac disease. Proper diagnosis will exclude other serious illnesses. So, a timely diagnosis, with a lifelong gluten-free diet, is the treatment for it. The lifelong gluten-free diet can most definitely prevent or reverse many of the symptoms of this illness, so it is particularly important that we have an early diagnosis of coeliac disease.

Coeliac disease is a very significant medical condition that, if undiagnosed and not treated properly, can cause serious problems, including malnutrition, osteoporosis, depression, infertility, and an increased risk of some forms of cancer such as lymphoma of the small bowel. Common symptoms in adults include anaemia, bloating, diarrhoea or constipation, fatigue, weakness and lethargy, nausea and vomiting, stomach cramps, weight loss—although weight gain is also possible. The most common symptoms exhibited in children include abdominal pain, bloating, chronic anaemia, diarrhoea or constipation, nausea and vomiting, weight loss or poor weight gain in older children, delayed growth or delayed puberty, tiredness and irritability. Clearly, many of those symptoms are non-specific and, by their very nature, contribute to the high level of underdiagnosis of the disease. Of particular concern is the vagueness of symptoms leading to an underdiagnosis in children.

Who gets coeliac disease? And I refer now to the Coeliac Australia website, where they say:

Coeliac disease affects people of all ages, both male and female.

You must be born with the genetic predisposition to develop coeliac disease.
The most important genes associated with susceptibility to coeliac disease are HLA DQ2 and HLA DQ8. Either one or both of these genes are present in virtually every person with coeliac disease. While 30% of the population carry one or both of these genes, only 1 in 30 of these people (approximately) will get coeliac disease.

A first degree relative (parent, sibling, child) of someone with coeliac disease has about a 10% chance of also having the disease. If one identical twin has coeliac disease there is an approximate 70% chance that the other twin will also have coeliac disease (but may not necessarily be diagnosed at the same time).

They conclude in this section by saying:

Environmental factors play an important role in triggering coeliac disease in infancy, childhood or later in life.

Many of us have been affected by coeliac disease, through personal diagnosis or the diagnosis of a relative or friend. There are many heart-warming stories from coeliac sufferers whose lives have improved dramatically following their diagnosis. Many stories are available on the numerous websites around the world and there are, of course, many Australian stories as well. I think it is important that consider the impact that this disease has on people throughout Australia in particular.

I have two case studies from people on the Gold Coast, which I would like to put on the record today. The first one is in relation to a six-year-old girl who started prep last year. When she started prep school her mother noticed that all of a sudden she was sick, had bad mouth ulcers and irregular bowel movements. She also had headaches, became bloated and lost a lot of weight. Her mother was very worried and booked her in to see her general practitioner. Her doctor performed a coeliac serology test, and her test results indicated a high likelihood of coeliac disease. A subsequent gastroscopy confirmed that she was coeliac. From that day on she changed to a gluten-free diet; within weeks her condition improved. Her mother said her daughter is now feeling a hundred per cent and is growing and thriving.

The second case study is a 51-year-old woman. In 2003 she was working full-time and going through IVF. She started to get unwell, lost some weight and lost her sense of taste. Her GP told her she had bacterial salmonella. In 2005 she became unwell again. Her IVF had not been successful up to this stage. In January 2006 she went to stay with friends and lost 11 kilograms in about eight weeks. She broke a couple of ribs, had a severe bout of flu and was very sick. When she visited her GP in New South Wales they also performed a blood test, and a subsequent biopsy revealed she was positive for coeliac disease. This was a huge relief for the woman. Since her diagnosis she says that she feels 'a million dollars', she notices that she is no longer grumpy or fatigued, feels she has more energy for children, and is more conscious of food and how it is prepared. Her past fertility and bone density issues could well have been a direct result of her previously undiagnosed coeliac disease. So, I think there is significant anecdotal evidence that indicates that early diagnosis is particularly important.

Coeliac Awareness Week is held annually from 13 to 20 March. Coeliac Awareness Week aims to raise awareness and discussion of coeliac disease, to encourage symptom awareness amongst the public as well as general practitioners, and to promote the message about importance of getting tested. Further information is available from the Coeliac Australia website and I encourage people to go and have a look at that.
I would like to conclude today by speaking about my visit last week to the CSIRO facility at Black Mountain in the ACT. I visited the facility in my role as Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Works. We had the privilege to meet with one of the researchers conducting research into low-gluten grains. One of the developments we heard about is how CSIRO is working to develop a low-gluten barley, which will be used as a first step towards producing a range of low-gluten foods and beverages for the Australian public.

I did ask the CSIRO to send me through some information, which they did, and I encourage the CSIRO to continue the work that they are doing because it is going to be very significant to those individuals who have been diagnosed with coeliac disease. I would like to note that the CSIRO is doing some work on the development of a low-gluten beer that is based on barley, and I understand from the beer connoisseurs that the authentic taste of a barley based beer cannot be found in the gluten-free beers that currently exist. They are made from sorghum, rice, millet and corn. I congratulate Coeliac Australia. I congratulate each of the five state based coeliac organisations. They do a wonderful job supporting the public and supporting their members.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Dr Southcott: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (13:07): I rise to support the motion put before this House by the member for McPherson. In doing so, I would like to congratulate her on the kind contribution that she has made to this debate. I can see from her words that she is passionate about this issue. It is important in this parliament that we recognise events such as Coeliac Awareness Week, which takes place from 13 to 20 March—a time when we will not be in the parliament. Parliament is not sitting next week, so it is important that we debate this today. It is also important that we emphasise the key aspect of this motion, which is the need for early diagnosis of coeliac disease, because early diagnosis can prevent the development of many of the associated problems.

Coeliac disease has a number of symptoms, and they are very vague and varied. People may ignore them or attribute them to something else. Some of the most common symptoms are diarrhoea, constipation, nausea, vomiting, flatulence, cramping, bloating, abdominal pain, fatigue, weakness and lethargy. These are symptoms I think that everybody can experience from time to time, and they manifest in iron deficiencies, failure to thrive, delayed puberty in children, weight loss or weight gain, bone and joint pain, recurrent mouth ulcers—as we have already heard from the contribution from the member from McPherson—as well as altered mental alertness, irritability, skin rashes, and even bruising of the skin.

Any one of those symptoms could be attributed to some other cause, and that is why it is so important that people should undergo the testing that is needed if they suspect they may have gluten intolerance—because that is exactly what coeliac disease is: gluten intolerance. If testing establishes that a person is living with or suffering from coeliac disease, then they need to immediately commence a gluten-free diet. It is extremely important that this medical diagnosis takes place early, as coeliac disease is a medical condition that has lifelong implications.

I am sure there is not a member of this House who does not have a constituent or has not been associated with somebody who has this disease. I have a very close friend who suffers
from coeliac disease, and this person's life has been changed since she had the diagnosis made. She was actually a woman in her 80s when she was diagnosed with coeliac disease, but by changing her diet and the way she ate she was able to make a big change in her health and general wellbeing. Over the years she had suffered with many of the associated diseases—type 2 diabetes, inflammation—and it is only now that she realises that this plethora of problems she was having could be related to coeliac disease. It is a very simple diagnosis. As has already been highlighted by the member for McPherson, there is a blood test, and then you go through a series of other screening tests. If you are diagnosed, it is important to be tested twice a year for the first year, and after that blood testing takes place on a yearly basis.

Coeliac Australia have done a fantastic job. They provide all the information that a person who suffers from coeliac disease needs. They provide guides to diet, guides to eating out and best practice information to people with coeliac disease. They emphasise very much that it is a disease for which you really need that early diagnosis, and the need for that early diagnosis is what I want to emphasise over and over again, because coeliac disease is not a disease that affects just one part of a person's body; it can affect most systems in the body, and it is a condition that occurs with a very high frequency, as has been highlighted by the member for McPherson. It is only through this early diagnosis and treatment that some of the problems that are associated with it can be prevented.

I would like to conclude by emphasising the need for more research to be undertaken. I would like to emphasise that Coeliac Australia are constantly pushing the boundaries to try to come up with better research and better ways of dealing with things, and I emphasise that it is really important a person who feels they may have coeliac go to their doctor, have the tests, make sure that they change their diet to a gluten-free diet and keep in touch with their doctor on a regular basis.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (13:12): I commend the member for McPherson on her initiative in bringing this motion before the House. The issue of coeliac disease is a serious one, and probably almost 80 per cent of the coeliac population are unaware that they have coeliac disease. Coeliac Awareness Week is coming up soon—13 to 20 March—and is aimed at raising awareness and increasing the rates of testing and diagnosis of coeliac disease.

It is important not just to have increased awareness in the population but also to have an increased suspicion amongst health professionals, particularly GPs, that someone may have coeliac disease. The member for McPherson read out some very powerful examples of people who had coeliac disease but had often been misdiagnosed. Coeliac disease is when the immune system reacts abnormally to gluten, causing small bowel damage that leads to various gastrointestinal and malabsorptive symptoms. Fortuitously, last week both the member for McPherson and I visited the CSIRO in Canberra, where we saw some of the scientific work that is going on there in the development of gluten-free bread and gluten-free beer. This is very important, because if people with coeliac disease can eliminate gluten from their diet then they can largely eliminate the symptoms, but if they do not eliminate gluten from the diet then they can have a number of serious health consequences, especially if the condition is not diagnosed or treated properly. People with coeliac disease have a genetic predisposition to developing it, and it affects at least one in 100 Australians. There are probably 160,000 Australians who have coeliac disease and do not yet know it. Timely diagnosis of coeliac
disease and treatment with a gluten-free diet can prevent and reverse many of the health conditions.

Coeliac Australia is a national federated not-for-profit organisation that supports people with coeliac disease and has done a lot in terms of making sure that gluten-free products are widely available. I commend the work of Coeliac Australia in raising funds to support research for coeliac disease and for raising awareness of coeliac disease and the gluten-free diet within the medical profession, the food and hospitality industry, along with the general public. It is now recognised that coeliac disease is more common than was previously thought. Growing awareness, better diagnosis and improved screening are the key to helping sufferers of coeliac disease, improving it and managing this disease.

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (13:15): I stand today to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for McPherson and to thank her for reminding the parliament of a particularly important week, Coeliac Awareness Week 2014, and the need for greater public awareness of this condition. Coeliac Awareness Week runs from 13 to 20 March. This year the campaign will run with the successful slogan from last year ‘Sick and tired of feeling sick and tired’.

Coeliac disease is an illness where a sufferer will have an abnormal reaction to gluten, a protein found in barley, oats and rye. It is a genetic disease which affects one in every 100 Australians. This suggests it is a quite common disease; however, these statistics alone are not the most disturbing. As mentioned in the motion, there is an alarmingly high number of undiagnosed sufferers, somewhere near 80 per cent. The only way we can reduce this number is by spreading the word and educating Australians on what coeliac disease is, how to identify its symptoms and encourage people to be tested if they have any such symptoms. Coeliac Awareness Week is the opportune time to encourage Australians to be tested.

Symptoms of coeliac disease can be widespread and differ in severity. Some symptoms are more noticeable and serious such as constipation, vomiting, nausea and delayed growth in children. There are, however, more mild symptoms and in some cases no immediate symptoms at all. Undiagnosed Australians may very well suffer from what seems like normal fatigue or stomach cramps, but simply shrug them off as something that will pass, not realising these are indeed symptoms of coeliac disease. Coeliac Awareness Week serves to get the word out to the community that even the most minor symptom could be a sign of coeliac disease.

Coeliac Awareness Week and the work of Coeliac Australia strive to tackle the biggest problem in regard to coeliac disease—that is, the rate of undiagnosed sufferers. When diagnosed and treated accordingly, by way of a gluten-free diet, coeliac sufferers can live a very normal life. On the other hand, sufferers who are undiagnosed risk severe, long-term health impediments such as the inability to absorb nutrients, systemic inflammation, irritable bowel syndrome and, in some cases, ovarian cancer. To avoid the more serious illnesses the message from Coeliac Australia is a simple one: visit your GP and get tested.

I would like to commend Coeliac Australia for the wonderful work they do in raising awareness of coeliac disease in our community. Representing around 25,000 members whose illnesses require a gluten-free diet, Coeliac Australia works to ensure those who are diagnosed can live a high quality life. With their five-state organisation, Coeliac Australia provides their members with medical advice and information from cooking recipes to travelling tips and restaurant recommendations for those who require a gluten free diet. I would also like to join
in congratulating Coeliac Australia for their continued efforts in fundraising and research around the disease. Coeliac Australia also does a fantastic job in lobbying for its members—for example, their work around ensuring gluten-free food labelling. Dr Jason Tye-Din, a gastroenterologist by trade and also the Coeliac Australia Medical Advisory Committee chairman, has suggested that of all his coeliac-suffering patients, the ones who took up membership with Coeliac Australia by way of their state branches have found it easier to adopt a gluten-free diet and enjoy a high quality life.

Coeliac Awareness Week is a time when we can all assist Coeliac Australia in getting the message out. Head to the website www.sickandtired.com.au where there is more information about the campaign. On this website you can also print off materials such as posters, fact sheets and flyers to help show support and spread the message of Coeliac Awareness Week. There are also plenty of videos uploaded by Australians who have been diagnosed with coeliac disease talking about how they felt before they got tested and why it is a good idea for people with similar symptoms to also visit their local GP.

I am pleased to do my part in getting behind Coeliac Awareness Week 2014. Publicising this week is the best opportunity we have to reduce the number of undiagnosed sufferers. I would urge all of my parliamentary colleagues to get behind this initiative. A little bit of work by all of us now, pushing for people to visit their local GP and get tested, could in turn reduce the long-term health risks of undiagnosed sufferers. All of us will have family or friends suffering from coeliac disease; many of them may not be aware of it. Coeliac Awareness Week provides us all with the opportunity and the information to highlight this condition throughout the nation.

Debate adjourned.

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**Rare Disease Day**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (13:19): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) 28 February is Rare Disease Day and encourages all Members to acknowledge that around 10 per cent of the population including 400,000 children suffer from these diseases;

(b) rare diseases, of which there are more than 8,000, are complex, often with inadequate or no treatment; and

(c) 80 per cent of rare diseases affect children and most begin in childhood only to continue throughout life;

(2) recognises that:

(a) for best practice treatments to be achieved, Australians with rare diseases must have access to a wide range of trials; and

(b) a rare disease registry is potentially valuable to the progress of medical research in this field; and

(3) acknowledges:

(a) the vital role organisations play in assisting the patients with treatment and quality of life; and

(b) that an investigation into the establishment of a national patient registry, free of commercial interests, for research purposes would benefit the wellbeing of many patients.

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Last Friday, 28 February was Rare Disease Day. Rare Disease Day is a day when we acknowledge that around 10 per cent of the Australian population, which includes 400,000 children, are suffering from a rare disease. These rare diseases are complex; often, there is inadequate treatment for these diseases. In Australia, there are more than 8,000 such diseases, and 80 per cent of rare diseases affect children. For most of them, these diseases continue throughout their life. The fact that these diseases are so rare acts against research into them. You need a critical mass of people affected by one disease to influence the decisions of government to undertake research into these diseases, such as Pompe disease, many motor neurone diseases and cystic fibrosis. There are a number of different types of cystic fibrosis that affect very small numbers of people.

As well as a lack of research into these diseases, there is an inadequate rate of diagnosis. Because these diseases are so rare, it takes a very long time for them to be diagnosed. Once the diagnosis takes place, management of the disease is very important. If the diagnosis is delayed, then the treatment is also delayed. One of the things that I think that is extremely important is the need to establish a rare diseases register that is free of commercial interests for research purposes and that will be beneficial to patients. We need to have a register of rare diseases. That would be of great assistance to people who are living with such diseases.

Establishing a diagnosis for patients with a rare disease provides an answer for their families, who have been searching for guidance on dealing with the illness that their loved one has been living with. It enables accurate genetic counselling for family members, where it identifies a genetic basis—because that is often the first step in understanding the biological pathways and in developing targeted treatments. Only a minute portion of people have a therapeutic option. That is the nature of rare diseases. They often need complex management and multidisciplinary services. Chris Walker, who came to see me—he is a friend of a friend—has two grandsons who have chronic idiopathic intestinal pseudo-obstruction, an X-linked filamin A defect. It is a very rare disorder; it affects children's bowels. There are only two families that have been identified as having children with this disease. There is one family in the US, and they have one surviving child, and there are Chris's grandchildren Jordan and Logan, the children of his daughter Brooke. They have central lines in their chests. They are extremely susceptible to infection. It is a full task, 24 hours a day—a task of love—to look after the children.

Rare diseases, by their very nature, are rare. The treatments that are available are very hard to access, and the first step towards actually dealing with the issues around rare diseases is to establish a register and have more research into these individual-type diseases.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (13:25): I rise to speak on the motion of the member for Shortland. We note that 28 February was Rare Disease Day. I support this motion that has three parts, including (1) noting the significance of the occurrence of rare diseases, (2) recognising the importance of access to trials and progress in the medical research field and (3) acknowledging the vital role which organisations play in treatment and quality of life of sufferers and investigating the calls from such organisations for the establishment of a centralised impartial national patient registry.

One such organisation which I have had an involvement with is Rare Voices Australia. Rare Voices Australia was established in 2012 with the vision to be the unified voice of all Australians living with rare disease. Rare Voices carries out the important task of advocating for the needs of those living with rare diseases.
on behalf of approximately two million Australians who live with a rare disease. I am pleased to inform the House that this Thursday I will be hosting, with Rare Voices Australia, a barbecue to celebrate Rare Disease Day and see the launch of the publication *The Australian Experience of Living with a Rare Disease* here at Parliament House. I also note that the member for Shortland hosted the same barbecue last year. It is important that we, as parliamentarians on both sides of the House, do all that we can to raise awareness of this important issue which affects members of our community. I hope that many of my parliamentary colleagues will join with me on Thursday to hear firsthand the stories of people living with a rare disease.

Rare disorders are life threatening, often chronically debilitating and complex. They have been known to have affected the lives of people such as John F Kennedy, Venus Williams, Lou Gehrig, Dan Aykroyd and Missy Elliott—all of whom were diagnosed with a rare disease. I recently met with Lesley Murphy from Rare Voices Australia and she brought to my attention that whilst each instance of a rare disease may be sporadic, collectively, rare diseases are quite common within the community. In fact, it is estimated that approximately 10 per cent of the Australian population is directly affected by one or more of 8,000 rare diseases, and 400,000 of them are children.

Looking a bit closer to home, in my electorate of Swan, members might recall the story of the Dierkx family, whose six-year-old son Christian suffers from Hunter syndrome. This causes the build-up of molecules in the body and leads to the enlargement of joints, organs, heart valves and airways to the point where they cease to function. Christian began treatment with the use of the drug Elaprase—the only known treatment for Hunter syndrome—in 2009 under the Life Saving Drugs Program.

Unfortunately, in 2011 Christian's parents were advised that the Commonwealth would no longer fund the treatment on the grounds that there was no evidence of significant neuro-developmental deterioration. The Dierkx family at that time lived in the electorate of Cowper and received assistance from the member to have Christian reinstated onto the Life Saving Drugs Program by doing speeches in this place and in the main chamber, and also by involving the media. They then moved into my electorate of Swan in 2013 and immediately contacted my office for an appointment regarding the matter. I wrote to the then Minister for Health seeking for Christian to continue to receive treatment, at least until an appeals case was heard. Though ministerial intervention, I had the pleasure of informing the House, midway through last year, of the good news that Christian's treatment had been reinstated.

Christian's case highlights the unique challenges that each rare disease sufferer faces and also the fact that the issues faced by people living with rare diseases are similar, in that diagnosis is often difficult and delayed and treatment is complicated and very expensive. I just heard in the last speech about coeliac disease being difficult to diagnose, and I know that through my own wife, Cheryle, who has coeliac disease. It is these common challenges that we need to concentrate on in order to assist sufferers and invest in the betterment of their wellbeing.

One of the ways to assist in the diagnosis and management of a rare disease which is often brought up is through the establishment of a national patient registry. It is argued that such a national plan would provide a unified approach, leading to better coordinated care and better resource distribution, allowing us to achieve the best outcome for people living with rare
diseases. I support the member for Shortland's acknowledgement that an investigation into the establishment of a national patient registry, free of commercial interests, for research purposes, would benefit the wellbeing of many patients. I commend this motion to the House and thank the member for Shortland for bringing it to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): Member for Swan, were you seconding the motion?

Mr IRONS: Yes, I second the motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would like to associate myself with the remarks of both the member for Shortland and the member for Swan as my family is touched by a rare disease. My nephew has a rare disease.

Debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 13:30 to 15:59

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Cypriot Wine Festival

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (15:59): I would like to talk about the Cypriot Wine Festival that I attended on Saturday night. It is the annual Cyprus wine festival that is conducted by the Cypriot community of Melbourne, Victoria. This particular festival was the 20th anniversary. Its aim is to promote Cypriot food and wine to the broader community, including Cypriot culture.

The motto of the wine festival, which you are all very familiar with now, is that if you drink wine, you will have long and good health, inserting the other platitude: excellence in moderation is very important if you want a long life and good health.

Cypriots are very proud of their winemaking history. They are also proud of the wonderful food that is always on offer when I and many other guests attend these functions.

The Cypriot Wine Festival was very well attended on Saturday night. There was a cross-group of first-generation Australians of Cypriot background with their grandparents and their grandchildren. The beauty of it being at the South Wharf for the first time meant that it was available for a greater audience to participate in.

I would like to congratulate the Cypriot community of Victoria—Melbourne, Victoria, in particular—its president James Wood, and the many hundreds of volunteers that make this wonderful event possible.

McPherson Electorate: Robina Lions Club

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (16:01): I rise to speak about one of the fantastic community organisations in my electorate in McPherson, the Robina Lions, who recently celebrated their 25th anniversary. Twenty-five years of service to the community is an outstanding achievement, and I congratulate and thank Robina Lions Club and its members for all the wonderful work that they have done and continue to do for our community.

Over the past 25 years Robina Lions have raised almost $2 million, supported many individuals and groups internationally, nationally and locally, including those with special needs, autism, vision impairment, cancer and children in need, and they have contributed greatly to medical research.
Robina Lions are always there to lend a hand at events such as the Robina triathlon, the Gold Coast Marathon, the football, the pet and animal expo and many others. I cannot thank them enough for their support of local citizenship ceremonies.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the first charter president of the club, Toula Singer, who continues to be a very active member of the club. In the time that I have been a member of the Robina Lions Club, there have been three presidents, each of whom have been outstanding: Heather Veltmeyer, John McIntyre and the current president John Clark, who, along with office bearers, secretary Heather Veltmeyer and treasurer Les Thirlwall, have done an absolutely fabulous job for the community. I congratulate all the past presidents and members of the Robina Lions Club over the past 25 years, and I say thank you.

**Shortland Electorate: Australia Day Awards**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:02): On Australia Day this year two outstanding Shortland residents were awarded the Order of Australia: Edward or Ted Atchison as he is known and William Storer.

Ted Atchison is an outstanding citizen, who lives in Charlestown and who has been very active over many years in service groups and the sporting community. He is a very effective member of Rotary and is dedicated to community services. His contributions to sport in the Hunter are phenomenal.

William is also a resident of Charlestown. He was awarded membership of the Order of Australia for his very significant services to the visual arts, especially for his hard work in the development of regional and community museums.

Both these men have lobbied me on many occasions, fighting for organisations in the community, and both are highly regarded in the local community. Furthermore, both men have the qualities that epitomise why a person needs to be awarded membership of the Order of Australia. Congratulations. These are honours well earned.

I would also like to congratulate Nathan Outteridge and Iain Jensen, two Lake Macquarie sailors who won gold at the London Olympics and have also been awarded the membership of the Order of Australia. Lake Macquarie is the largest saltwater lake in the Southern Hemisphere and provides unique opportunities for sailors like Nathan and Iain to develop their skills. Congratulations Nathan and Iain, you are role models and an inspiration for our future sailors and Olympians.

**Slattery, Mr Laurie**

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (16:04): I would like to acknowledge the memory of the late Laurie Slattery, a highly regarded member of my local community. During the 1960s, a 20-year-old Laurie Slattery volunteered for a groundbreaking study on resuscitation for the Royal Lifesaving Association. This study was dangerous, in fact life threatening, as Laurie was given a general anaesthetic and then injected with curare, a poison that renders people incapable of breathing.

Laurie was kept alive for 90 minutes by various methods of resuscitation while blood tests were taken to establish the oxygen levels in his blood. This led to the development of the expired air resuscitation method, better known as 'mouth-to-mouth', which is now the standard method of resuscitation used by lifeguards throughout the world—a breakthrough which has saved countless lives. For his bravery, Laurie Slattery was given the British Empire
Medal, after being named in the Queen's 1961 honours list for the 'calculated risking of one's life or health in the cause of humanity'.

Laurie was the captain of the Cars Park Life Saving Club. He taught children across the state how to swim, and for that he became known as 'king of the kids'. Not surprisingly, he never tired of giving demonstrations of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation! Despite his death in 2006, at the age of 67, Laurie remains a symbol of that great human nature and that ever-present Aussie spirit. Laurie Slattery will never be forgotten by his family or community.

**Lalor Electorate: Cambridge Primary School**

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (16:05): On 17 February this year, I visited Cambridge Primary School in my electorate. I commend the Principal, Meenah Marchbank, for leading this school on an amazing improvement journey. In 2002, the school was accredited as an international school by the European Council of International Schools; it is the first primary school globally to be accredited by this organisation.

I met assistant principals Nella Cascone and Craig Spry and the School Council President, Reg Stott—a very proud fireman and involved father. In the BER building—a new, fantastic gymnasium, which the school uses every day—I met with the newly elected school leaders and presented them with their captain badges. Cambridge Primary School captains for this year are Neesha Howarth and Deshan Vitharana Pathirana. I talked to them about leadership and about the fact that it is not always the best speaker or the first to stand up for a job who is the best leader but rather someone who their peers think will represent the school community well.

I walked away feeling buoyed by the enthusiasm and encouragement that the children receive at Cambridge Primary School from their incredibly professional staff and from their families. I wish the leaders a successful year, and I hope they carry the experiences and lessons learnt into their futures.

**Murray Electorate: Boosey Creek Cheese**

Dr STONE (Murray) (16:06): I rise to speak on a magnificent Murray electorate cheese producer who has received national recognition for their award-winning cheeses over the last two years. Boosey Creek cheeses are made by the third generation of the Cameron family. They manufacture close to Yarrawonga, at Boosey.

Boosey Creek Cheese have won numerous nationally recognised awards over the years. In 2013 their Warby Red won gold at the 2013 Victoria and Dairy Industry Association of Australia awards and the Royal Melbourne Fine Food Awards. Their Warby Red also won the Siliker Award, which is a trophy for the highest scoring camembert-brie style cheese in Australia. More recently, Boosey Creek Cheese won gold for their Boosey soft creamy camembert and a silver for their Warby Red wash rind at the 2014 Sydney Royal Cheese and Dairy Produce Show awards. Boosey Creek cheeses use local names for their champion cheeses like Warby Red, which is named after the nearby Warby Ranges and takes up the colour of the great red granite in the Warbys.

Boosey Creek Cheese is just one of the many great cheese producers in my electorate of Murray, where food production is the cornerstone of our economy. We are the food bowl. These awards show that we have some of the best cheeses in Australia, and I congratulate Boosey Creek Cheese for their outstanding performance on a national level. I am confident...
that they will continue to produce some of the best cheeses for us in Australia and then they will move out into the global markets and prove that they are as good as anyone anywhere.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): I can concur with that.

**Bendigo Electorate: Women's National Basket Ball League**

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (16:08): Today I rise to let the House know that this weekend Bendigo, my home town, will host the Women's National Basket Ball League championships. The Bendigo Spirit team is one victory away from claiming back-to-back titles. For the second year straight, the Bendigo Spirit will meet the Townsville Fire in the WNBL grand final.

The Bendigo Spirit is a team of champions, but every team of champions needs an opposition—a team that will try and match their greatness. Whilst I am sure that the Townsville Fire will bring it this weekend, my money is on our home team—the team to win again. With four-time Olympian and Bendigo captain, Kristi Harrower, taking the lead, I am sure that the Bendigo Spirit will once again win the grand final.

The accolades keep coming for our famous and talented Bendigo Spirit basketball team. Last Friday at the 49th annual Bendigo Sports Star awards, the team was recognised again. The Spirit's victory in 2012-13 was acknowledged. The team was successful in winning the inaugural Faith Leech Achievement Award. Just like Faith did in 1956, last year the Bendigo Spirit played against the Townville Fire and they showed how athletes from regional centres can excel, whether it be in the pool or on the court. The Bendigo Spirit, I am sure, will rise again to be victors this weekend.

**Water**

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (16:10): I have spoken before in this place about the need for water in the Calare electorate. It is a wonderful part of Australia, it is the oldest part of regional Australia, but it does have water issues for mining, for industry, for urban development—particularly in the west, which is two-thirds of it. There is a magnificent site called Needles near Canowindra, between the Cowra, Cabonne and Blayney shires, a site where 100,000 megalitres of water can be stored—a great catch. It would give industry and the irrigation below it greater security, but basically it would provide 50,000 megalitres of water in other places that will be able to look after industry and urban needs rather than irrigation.

A coalition government, especially one with an infrastructure and production dams policy and a determination to move Australia way beyond its recent malaise, has an opportunity here. The National Party particularly must show leadership and provide the opportunity for state water to do the necessary trials and tests to make this a reality, to show the cost benefit and to show how this can be done. It needs to happen now.

**Dimech, Mr Lawrence**

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (16:11): I rise to acknowledge a great Australian and a great local, Lawrence Dimech. Lawrence came to Australia from Malta back in 1956—a couple of years before I was born—and he has well and truly made Australia his home, along with waves of migrants from Malta, Italy and Greece in the fifties and sixties. And while there has
not been hardly any migration from Malta in the past 20 years, the Maltese community in my electorate remains a fundamentally important part of our community.

I want to acknowledge Lawrence today for an award he received quite recently. He returns to Malta quite regularly with his grandchildren, but recently he went to Malta for a very special reason—that is, to receive the Maltese National Order of Merit. This award is rarely given to people outside of the Mediterranean republic, but it was given to Lawrence in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to the Maltese people both here in Australia and back in Malta. Lawrence is 77 now; he is a journalist and former diplomat, and he has genuinely contributed greatly to our country. He was inducted by the President of Malta, George Abela, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Joseph Muscat. I know he is incredibly pleased and we in Parramatta are incredibly proud of him and wish him all the best.

**Schools**

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (16:13): I rise to give due praise to the young people of the Fisher and Fairfax electorates who came together recently for a Constitutional convention. The question was, 'Should there be a bill of rights?' At the outset, I should say that I asked for a show of hands and, not surprisingly, the young people overwhelmingly at the start of their convention decided that they wanted a bill of rights. What is so brilliant is that they came with open minds, they also came with inquisitive minds. By the end of the day, they decided that Australia would be better without a bill of rights. They came to that conclusion for two reasons: because of the effect it would have on federalism and states rights, and because of the experience with American gun laws. In particular, John Howard's Aussie gun control laws would not have been possible with an American style system. I thought they were very interesting and very mature observations.

I particularly want to congratulate the three candidates who will be coming down to Canberra next week for the national convention. They are Adam Cass, from Meridian State College, Josh Henshaw, from Burnside State High School, and Jaymin Pratt, from Immanuel Lutheran College. They will all do the Sunshine Coast proud. I thank the convenors, particularly Sonja, and the Beerwah, Caloundra, Chancellor, Immanuel, Kawana, Maroochydore, Meridian, Noosa, St Columbans and Unity colleges and schools for their participation in this wonderful event.

**Blair Electorate: Ipswich Headspace**

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:14): Just over a year ago I had the pleasure of attending with the then Minister for Mental Health and Ageing Mark Butler the official opening of the headspace in Ipswich. It was very popular event and it was not because of Mark's or my charm or good looks on the day. Jharal Yow Yeh, the Brisbane Broncos player, was there and Jharal spoke movingly about his career-threatening injury and how he had sought mental health help from family and friends. He spoke brilliantly that day and inspired the young people on that occasion.

The former federal Labor government invested massively in mental health. In fact we were the first government to ever appoint a minister for mental health. We spent a record $2.2 billion, with $200 million of that establishing 90 headspaces across Australia. Available to young people 12 to 25 years of age, headspace has provided a lot of support for young people living in the Ipswich and Somerset region. Sadly, within the first couple of months, the
Ipswich headspace has become one of the busiest headspace centres in the country. One in four young people have experienced a mental health issue this year. That will be the tragedy of mental health problems for young people. It has become a very important issue across this country.

I want to commend Aftercare Ivan Frkovic and Tess Barr for the work they do along with the team at Ipswich headspace. I visited there recently. The work continues. The cause endures and the hope of a cure for mental health problems still lives.

Forde Electorate: Beenleigh Family Centre Child Care

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (16:16): I know it gives you great delight, Mr Deputy Speaker Mitchell, to give me the call! It is with great pleasure that I rise this afternoon to celebrate the achievement of one of our great childcare centres. The Beenleigh Family Centre Child Care achieved the rating of exceeding the national quality standard, the highest mark given under the federal National Quality Framework for child care. Beenleigh Family Centre is a long daycare centre that operates from the premises of the family centre, providing a unique opportunity for integrated services such as young parent support and child-health sessions.

Beenleigh Family Centre Child Care works closely with families to ensure that the best care is provided to the children in their care. The centre is run by Wesley Mission Brisbane, a not-for-profit organisation that provides vital support services to families within our community. The Beenleigh Family Centre can now apply for an Excellent rating. This is a terrific opportunity and a credit to the director Mellenie Mathieson and the staff. I was pleased to hear Mellenie and the team plan to utilise this opportunity to share their knowledge, passion and skills across the sector by networking with other services. I have visited the centre on a number of occasions and always look forward to going back and hearing more about the great work they do. This is just one example of what makes our community such a wonderful community, and I look forward to sharing more positive news about their successes.

Hotham Electorate: Lunar New Year Festival in Springvale

Ms O’NEIL (Hotham) (16:17): It was an honour to spend Australia Day celebrating the Lunar New Year Festival in Springvale. Ninety thousand people crammed Buckingham Avenue for a celebration that has become one of Melbourne's most successful annual events, and I was joined by the member for Isaacs for that event.

Success is due in large part to the dedication of the Springvale Asian Business Association, SABA, and its President Tom Huynh, owner of local travel agency Extra Green Travel. I want to acknowledge Stan Chang, a SABA past president and friend who has made a great contribution to Springvale over the years. Under the leadership of Tom, Stan, Frankie Chen, Quang Hung Ong, Martin Lee and founding President Hoang Tran, SABA have been the driving force of this festival for 21 years.

This year the Federation of Chinese Associations and their President Vincent Chow joined SABA to organise a thrilling event. The federation is made up of a large number of groups including the Monash Chinese Friendship Association, the Cambodian Chinese Friendship Association of Victoria and the Melbourne East Region Chinese Friendship Centre. The Year of the Horse is known as one of speedy success—an appropriate theme for Springvale, which
in just two generations has become one of the most lively, multicultural and exciting suburbs in all of Melbourne. On behalf of the people of Hotham, I would like to wish the parliament:

- Chuc Mung Moi Xin
- nian kuai le.

Happy New Year and may the year of the Wooden Horse bring great fortune to you and your families and to the vibrant, diverse community I am privileged to represent in Hotham.

**Charitable Organisations**

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (16:17): I have been fortunate in recent years to interact with charitable institutions in my electorate such as the Salvation Army, Anglicare, Baptcare, the Launceston City Mission, St Vincent de Paul, and the Benevolent Society. In the case of the Salvation Army, this wonderful organisation celebrated its 130th year of service to the Launceston community late last year, and there was a wonderful evening of historical reflection.

As all members of this House would be aware, charity groups do extraordinary work in helping those less fortunate among us. The demand for their programs and services has never been so great within my community due to the current economic conditions facing Tasmania and the social challenges they bring. Sadly, these conditions include the highest adult and youth unemployment rates in the country, and the unmet need for services is large and growing.

These groups help people find work. They assist children. They provide hot meals. They assist those suffering from mental health issues and substance abuse and addiction. The effort and passion they put into such essential programs reflects an extraordinary generosity of spirit. Yet these organisations would not be able to run the programs without the help and financial assistance of everyday Australians.

I encourage people to think of these organisations not just during the Christmas season but also throughout the year. By doing so they will enable the organisations to continue extending moments of joy and happiness to families all around Australia.

**Australian Defence Force**

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (16:20): On Saturday I was privileged to attend a welcome home parade in Darwin for Australian troops: men and women who had been deployed and served in Afghanistan across 2013. More than 250 ADF personnel, predominantly members of the Army, took part in the parade, which formally recognised the service and achievements of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment Task Group, Combined Team Uruzgan 4 and Combined Team Uruzgan 5—all of whom were deployed in Afghanistan across 2013.

The parade was led by members of the Royal Australian Engineers with explosive detection dog Domino, who re-enacted a route clearance mission. As we all know, this is a vital task in ensuring the safety and security of Australian soldiers during their operations.

The engineers were followed by members of Combined Team Uruzgan rotations 4 and 5, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment Task Group, Force Support Unit 7, the Logistics Training Advisory Team, Artillery Training Advisory Team 2 and Armoured Core Support Elements and Force Communication Units rotations 8 and 9. They all proudly marched through the CBD of Darwin.
They were there acknowledged and welcomed by the Prime Minister, the Hon. Tony Abbott, the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Bill Shorten, the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Morrison, and many other dignitaries. There was then an affirmation by those three people in speeches they made in the Northern Territory parliament in Darwin about the importance of their contribution and the support they have from the whole of the Australian community across the political spectrum.

**Deakin Electorate: Infrastructure**

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (16:22): I am pleased to rise today to discuss the coalition's commitment to delivering local infrastructure and creating jobs in my electorate of Deakin. Recently I attended the opening of the new, $197 million Mitcham railway station. It is a premium station, which is manned from first train to last each day and which contributes to the removal of level crossings on Mitcham Road and Rooks Road. The project to build the station created 140 jobs.

In Ringwood, residents will benefit from the construction of the new, $66 million Ringwood railway station. The Ringwood railway station project has enabled the Queensland Investment Corporation to undertake a $500 million redevelopment of Eastland shopping centre, which will create 2,000 construction jobs.

I also recently visited Croydon Central shopping centre to offer my personal encouragement and assistance for a $50 million redevelopment of the centre. This project will create not only construction jobs but also ongoing jobs in hospitality and retail.

Last but definitely not least there is the East West Link, to which the federal coalition is contributing $1½ billion and which will create more than 3,000 jobs. I am dedicated to working with all levels of government, with community groups and with businesses to improve local infrastructure and to create the jobs and investment needed to make Deakin an even better place to live.

**Fraser Electorate: Youth Connections Program**

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (16:23): I rise today to applaud Youth Connections, a national youth education program which is delivered in my electorate by Anglicare and to urge the federal government to continue to fund it. At this stage it is uncertain whether there will be funds beyond this year for the Youth Connections youth education program to continue. Youth Connections is designed to keep young people engaged in high school. It offers a flexible service which keeps them in school and on the road to meaningful and decently-paid work.

Take the story of Alice. When Alice moved with her family to Canberra at the age of 12 she found it difficult to make friends at school. She was bullied severely and eventually stopped going to school. Suffering from depression, she started taking harmful drugs, ran away from home and fell pregnant. She found safe shelter in a refuge. Faced with the prospect of becoming a young mother, Alice sought help from Youth Connections. She joined the program, and the program provided essential baby items, helped to transport her to medical appointments and—after the birth of her daughter—assisted with domestic violence issues and court proceedings.
Alice persevered and graduated with the Youth Connections program, and then enrolled in a Certificate IV in Youth Work. Evaluations show the program is successful and Alice's story helps to inspire young people.

Education matters, whether it is school, higher education or on-the-job training in a gap year—as with my intern for this week, Tom Russell-Penny, who is with me today. I urge the government to continue to fund Youth Connections—a program whose evaluations are strong and whose stories are powerful.

Hinkler Electorate

Mr Pitt (Hinkler) (16:25): In recent weeks I have had the great pleasure of meeting some of Hinkler's best and brightest. High school students from Hervey Bay, Kepnock, Kingaroy, Bundaberg, North Bundaberg and St Luke's Anglican School gathered in Maryborough for a constitutional convention. Teams discussed the arguments for and against Australia having a bill of rights. The students chose Maria Anderson from Hervey Bay State High School to represent the region in Canberra later this month. Here in Parliament House today, I met with the school captains of Bundaberg Christian College: Fletcher Castelli, Nic Weiss, Sinead Edwards and Eliza Henderson. I also recently had the pleasure of presenting badges to Kepnock Bay State High School 2014 student leaders Madalyn Thomson, Henry Carlile, Laura Wilson and Robert McLellan.

The year 2014 marks 50 years since Kepnock opened its doors to the Bundaberg community. Three former Kepnock students, myself included, have gone on to become elected members of the Australian parliament. Becoming the next Brian Courtice was certainly not something I had in mind when I graduated from Kepnock State High School in 1986! The school has grown in size since then, and the cross-country shortcut through the adjacent cane paddock is now a housing estate, but the school has maintained its connection with agriculture and has remained true to its motto: 'Success is earned'. In half a century, many Kepnock students have gone on to forge highly successful careers in sport, art, media, law, science, health, agriculture and industry. The strength of any school is not in the bricks and mortar. At the heart of a successful school like Kepnock is a group of passionate, hardworking teachers who inspire and encourage their students to persist.

These recent meetings with young people have strengthened my confidence in the next generation.

Medicare

Ms Rishworth (Kingston) (16:26): I rise today to share my deep concern about the proposed $6 GP tax that the coalition will not rule out. I ask the government to rule this GP tax out. This tax will have a significant impact on my electorate in Kingston, where 83 per cent of local residents are currently bulk-billed. If a $6 tax was added to that, it will cost my electorate $5 million plus. This is a significant impost. It will detract from people being able to see a doctor when they need to.

We have heard the member for Higgins say: 'This is not a tax, it is a price point; it is a price point in the market.' Yet the coalition has not demonstrated that GPs are actually over-servicing—saying it is a price point is actually an argument that it will bring servicing down. What evidence has the coalition shown that there is over-servicing by GPs? At a time when, for example, we are trying to encourage men to go and get their prostate checked by their
GPs—something that they feel very uncomfortable about doing—we are going to put another barrier, a price point or tax, in the way of them going to get preventative health care which is so important. I call on the government to reassess this and to rule it out. This will hit families hard. Most importantly, it will destroy our universal health system. This is ill-thought through. It is a policy that will affect the rest of health policy and I ask the coalition to reconsider.

**Flynn Electorate**

Mr O’DOWD (Flynn) (16:28): I wish to bring to the House's attention to the fact that the Central Highlands Easter Sunflower Festival is being held in Emerald, Central Queensland in 2014. This will mark 38 years of the festival being held. The dates of the festival are from 16 to 21 April, and the week-long activities and festivities will include art exhibitions and decorated window competitions throughout the townships of Emerald—my office is also getting into the spirit; we have just planted sunflowers outside the electoral office. There will also be street parades, a horserace day, and the crowning of the sunflower queen and junior princess. The town welcomes many visitors during this time.

A special welcome was extended to Canadian visitors from Emerald's sister city of Altona, Manitoba. In July this year, our Canadian friends will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of their own sunflower festival. I wish all the entrants the very best in the competition, and all the best with the fundraising activities for their chosen charities. Thank you to the Central Highlands Easter Sunflower Festival committee for their enthusiasm and for ensuring the continuance of this festival for the past 38 years. Thanks also go to the Central Highlands Regional Council, to past and present sunflower queens and princesses, and to the Central Highlands community for making this a very successful event indeed. If you are looking for something—(Time expired)

**Fremantle Electorate: Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp**

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (16:29): I rise to acknowledge the passion, dedication and sheer hard work of the Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp, who, since 2001, have undertaken the preservation of the site and enabled greater public access to the important history and heritage of the old Woodman Point Quarantine Station in my electorate.

First used in 1852 to quarantine a shipload of passengers suffering whooping cough, Woodman Point was gazetted in 1886 as Western Australia's permanent quarantine station. This use of the site lasted until 1979, and during this time the site grew from eight hectares to 50 hectares.

A tour of the now faithfully restored isolation hospital reminds us of the misery and deadliness of afflictions such as smallpox and Spanish influenza. Indeed, the 1919 flu epidemic took the lives of four nursing staff and 29 military personnel as set out in Ian Darroch’s books *The Boonah Tragedy* and *Fremantle Tales*. In 1943, meanwhile, six crewmen of the *SS Suva* succumbed to smallpox. Some of these victims remain buried on the site.

The heritage-listed ablution, fumigation and laundry buildings make plain and palpable the rigorous procedures and restrictions applied to quarantine passengers. These procedures and restrictions are described on the website of the Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp. Disembarking passengers were herded from the jetty across the narrow beach and straight into
the barn-like shower block, where they were processed through three sections before emerging clean on the other side to commence an often long period of isolation.

This site of sombre significance, a somewhat hidden treasure, would not be in the excellently restored condition in which it stands today without the Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp. I thank their members past and present for their dedication to this important historical asset. (Time expired)

**Tangney Electorate: Outstanding Residents**

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (16:31): Today I rise to congratulate outstanding members of the Tangney community on their contribution to the electorate and the wider community. Montana Scott, Brydie Dumma and Tayla Edwards of Riverton Primary School raised $400 for Second Chance Horse Rescue and Rehabilitation by putting on a free-dress day at their school.

Since 2006, Second Chance Horse Rescue and Rehabilitation has rescued over 100 equines in Western Australia and assisted in improving the welfare of countless others. The donation will greatly assist the good work this organisation does. I highly commend the drive of these students and their willingness to raise funds in support of this cause.

I also congratulate Applecross resident Mathias Gebauer, whose photo has been selected to appear on the cover of the Fremantle and inner south-east Yellow Pages. Mr Gebauer's photograph of Perth taken from the South Perth Foreshore captures the Perth cityscape in all its glory.

Mr Gebauer's is one of eight photos that has been selected out of thousands of entries. His photo is a fine example of the artistic creativity that exists in the electorate, and I applaud his contribution in capturing the spirit of the state in his photo.

**Charlton Electorate: Alesco Senior College**

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (16:32): Recently I visited Alesco Senior College, a Hunter based education provider which is helping young people who have had some difficulty in their lives to complete their Higher School Certificate. I was truly humbled and impressed by the work of the college and its teachers, who create a supportive environment and focus on each individual student and their unique learning needs. The young men and women I met there are remarkable people, each of whom has enormous capacity but each of whom, for a range of reasons, has been prevented from finding success through traditional education pathways.

I was truly privileged to have them open up and tell me their personal stories about why conventional schooling had not worked for them. It was remarkable how open and honest they were. I was also treated to some very impressive performances, including a Heavy Metal rendition and a folk song written by the great grandson of Smoky Dawson. They were great performances, and I thank all the students who presented.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Ben Grushka, Rowan Radvan, Theresa Pantalone and all the staff at Alesco. I thank Kim Parkinson, Mitchell Webb and Shea Oakley for taking me on a tour of their college. You are all achieving great things. You are all a tribute to this great institution which is giving people a second chance. It is great to see education in action.
Capricornia Electorate: Jason Rich Foundation

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (16:34): As I move around my electorate I come across inspiring stories which restore one's faith in humanity. Recently I visited the JBS meat processing plant, a large-scale employer on the outskirts of Rockhampton.

Tracey Rich works there as the stores purchasing manager. Her eldest son, Jason, was 21 when he was killed in his car while driving to work. Jason wasn't speeding but, due to lack of experience, he was unable to control his car in very poor weather conditions.

Tracey, and Jason's best mate Jacob McLuskie, have made it their mission to honour him through the Jason Rich Foundation. Their goal is to raise funds to pay for places for year 12 students in Rockhampton to undertake defensive driving courses.

Undertaking such a course costs $154 per student. During my meeting at JBS, I was made aware that the company is contributing over $9,000 to fund 60 such places to put P-plate students through the course. Companies like this and their staff contribute much to our community.

A further goal of the Jason Rich Foundation is to encourage the government to make it mandatory for all students to undertake a defensive driving course before they leave school. The foundation will hold more fundraising events over the next few months. If local people, or indeed my parliamentary colleagues, wish to donate to such a worthwhile cause, please get in touch with me.

Isaacs Electorate: Open Water Swims

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (16:35): On 1 March I had the pleasure of competing in the open water swim conducted by the Edithvale Life Saving Club and the Aspendale Life Saving Club, known as the Club2Club Swim.

It is the 12th time that the swim has been conducted and it draws swimmers from all over Melbourne and many from our local community. It is one of three open water swims that are conducted in my electorate each year—the other ones being the swim conducted by the Mentone Life Saving Club, in December, which I also had the pleasure of competing in—and the one that is to be held on 23 March by the Bonbeach Life Saving Club.

I congratulate the organisers of all of these open water swims. They are terrific community events and very useful fundraisers for each of the clubs. The swims are now pretty much institutions in our community. They have all been held on quite a number of occasions, and I can see that they are going to be held for many years to come.

They are useful fundraisers because they support these clubs in the fantastic work that they do on Port Phillip Bay, which is to add to the safety that is provided to all swimmers from our communities who use the wonderful beaches along the western side of my electorate as well as providing training for the nippers, because all of these clubs have very strong nippers groups, making sure that all of our children are able to swim and use the beaches safely.

Reid Electorate: Turkish Community

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (16:37): I rise to congratulate the Bayram Turkish Cultural Association, where I had the honour of attending their annual Anatolian festival on Saturday. Reid is home to an amazing Turkish community—it has been for over 40 years—and also
home quite aptly to the Gallipoli mosque, which is the biggest mosque in the Southern Hemisphere. It is apt when you consider what we are about to experience within the next 12 months. It is amazing that two countries whose original ties were forged on the battlefield, almost 100 years later, have become so close.

In Reid we have an amazing community. Ataturk is often best known for the words that are inscribed on the shores of Gallipoli but one thing that is not known is that he was not only the founder of modern Turkey but he understood the importance of youth. One of the things he did in 1922 was set up children's day. He was smart enough to know that those children would be the foundation and the future of his country.

I do not think even he had the foresight to see where we are today. Those children have moved to Australia some 100 years later, have called it home and make a wonderful contribution day in, day out, raising their families. They are great Australian citizens, and I am honoured to be their member of federal parliament and have them live in Reid.

United Voice

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (16:38): Since the change of government, there has been no shortage of attacks on trade unions but I want to commend one trade union, United Voice, on its publication Real Voices for Change, done on the basis of contributions from no fewer than 26,000 of their members about what matters to Australians. They have identified cost of living, health care, job security and retirement incomes as critical issues.

When they talk about cost of living, their members have identified low wages, housing unaffordability and the cost of utilities. I have got to say that resonates with many of the things that I have heard from my own constituents.

One of the themes from the people surveyed, such as a paramedic from Victoria, was:

People everywhere feel we're taking one step forward, two steps back.

From a single mum in Tasmania:

Something's gone very wrong.

From a public education worker in Queensland:

The future isn't what it used to be.

They believed that things would be getting better and in fact they are not getting better; they are getting harder. This is a theme that I talked about last week in the grievance debate. One of their members, David Arthur, working in security in Victoria, says:

… companies are minimising their tax, bringing in migrant workers and paying them less, and then turning around to say they've got no money and they'll have to close down and go off shore.

I commend United Voice on this initiative.

Spastic Centres of South Australia

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (16:40): SCOSA—Spastic Centres of South Australia—is a not-for-profit organisation that was incorporated in 1950. It originated from very humble beginnings, when a group of parents came together at the Women's and Children's Hospital with a common objective of seeking support for their children who were living with disabilities. Today's SCOSA operates 13 client hubs spread across Adelaide and regional areas of South Australia, supporting hundreds of people living with disabilities, and also their families. Many of SCOSA's clients have cerebral palsy, while others also have acquired brain
injuries, autism or some other form of disability. The programs and activities SCOSA provide include educational and recreational activities such as literacy, numeracy, cooking, computing, arts and craft, music, gardening and a variety of supporting activities. I had the pleasure of participating in one of these—a game of bocce—with some of the clients.

One of SCOSA's new hubs is located at Plympton in the Hindmarsh electorate. It was a great joy and privilege to see the team of SCOSA in action recently and to see the positive difference they make for people living with disabilities. Congratulations to Kym and her seven staff at Plympton, who do a wonderful job caring for their 20 clients who visit that hub. It was made possible, this hub, by donations for around $160,000 from local companies and individuals, so it is great that a community gets together to support such a worthy facility as the SCOSA hub at Plympton.

**Victorian State Election**

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (16:41): Later this year the Victorian people will have an opportunity to cast a verdict on the Napthine Liberal government, a government which has been lurching from crisis to crisis over the past few years. The most recent incident was news over the weekend about Minister Mary Wooldridge, who was the Premier's hand-picked candidate for the state seat of Kew—in fact, he practically guaranteed her preselection. But it did not happen that way. There was a revolt within the Liberal Party ranks and the circumstances were that the minister was defeated.

Before that, we had the issue of the operation of the parliament and the circumstances around the rebel member for Frankston, Geoff Shaw. Again, he was a candidate put forward by the Liberal Party at the last election—some three-plus years ago—and the circumstances are that we have seen allegations made about Mr Shaw; we have seen his being expelled from the Liberal Party, which is underway at the moment; we have seen his being expelled from the parliamentary party; and we have seen a situation where the operation of the parliament has lurched from crisis to crisis. We have had the Premier saying, 'It's all fine, there's no problem; it's all under control', and then we see its work program being overturned. We see a situation where there is a complete lack of control and complete mismanagement, all of which is showing that this Liberal government does not know what it is doing. He is incapable of managing the state and he is going to go to a heavy defeat come November this year.

**Agriculture**

Mr Pasin (Barker) (16:43): I rise to acknowledge the attendance recently in the electorate of Barker of the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. I had the pleasure of hosting the minister on 18 and 19 February in Barker. On his first day I took the opportunity to introduce the minister to a number of livestock producers. We met, as you would, at a cattle exchange. We went to the Mt Gambier livestock market and we spoke to the producers there—this is timely because we are in the middle of establishing a white paper on agriculture—and following that we had dinner in Mt Gambier.

The next day we travelled to the northern parts of my electorate, to the Riverland. In the Riverland we met with Riverland wine grape growers who, having survived the drought, are suffering the ills of low commodity prices. We also took the opportunity to meet with Mr Con Poulos, from Citrus Australia SA, to talk about the plight of fruit fly in the region. I draw to the chamber's attention the fact that there have been two outbreaks of fruit fly in the
Riverland. These are being addressed as significant biosecurity matters that must be addressed as they are matters of national importance. These outbreaks have a significant impact on our ability to market our fruit out of that important region to the globe.

**GRIEVANCE DEBATE**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell) (16:49): The question is:

That grievances be noted.

**Foreign Aid**

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce) (16:45): I rise this afternoon to speak on the grievance debate and to make some points regarding the issue of the Australian aid budget, particularly Australia's contribution to two international initiatives, which I think are of tremendous significance in terms of providing real concrete and effective aid to those in the world who are most in need.

I refer particularly to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, commonly known as the GAVI, and also Australia's commitment to the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tb and Malaria.

We are a wealthy, prosperous nation and a generous nation. Australia certainly has a significant role as a global player in doing what we can to help stamp out poverty. If we just look at the immediate Asia-Pacific region, we have some 740 million living in extreme poverty—some 60 per cent of the world's undernourished. The numbers have halved since 1990, but there is still much more work to do.

The circumstances around the debate around foreign aid in recent times is that it was a consensus around the question of meeting the millennium development goals. However, in the lead-up to the last election there were changes—there were changes by the then government of which I was proud to be a member—and subsequently significant changes, drastic changes, on behalf of this coalition government.

I refer to a number of those changes in terms of an article which came out in *The Sydney Morning Herald* earlier this year:

The federal government will slash Australia's contribution to global initiatives to tackle climate change, health and sanitation crises in developing countries as part of its $650 million cuts to foreign aid.

The cuts, announced on Saturday, will strip almost $250 million in funding from the Asia-Pacific region and south Asia, despite Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's assurances that Australia will renew its foreign aid focus on the region.

Plan International said the timing of the cuts was almost as damaging as the cuts themselves, given the 2013-14 financial year is already more than 10 months underway.

It goes on:

The government will cut $61 million comes from the Pacific region, with only Nauru—escaping cuts.

Australia will also cut $116 million in planned expenditure from East Asia, including $59 million from Indonesia, $71 million from South and West Asia, including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, $113 million from Africa and the Middle East and $5.3 million from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Australia spent $3747 million in international aid in 2012-13, and Labor had budgeted for this to increase to $4223.5 million this financial year.
But 10 months into the financial year, the government released its revised 2013-14 foreign aid spending on Saturday, showing it will spend $3598 million this financial year. This is $625.5 million less than Labor's predicted spending and $149 million less than last year's spending.

... ... ...

Australia will cut $75.4 million from humanitarian, emergency and refugees programs, including $8.5 million from the International Committee of the Red Cross, $4 million from planned donations to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and $1 million from the United Nations Peacekeeping Fund.

It will also cut $23.9 million from UN, Commonwealth and other international organisations, including $6 million from the United Nations Development Programme, $4.2 million from UNICEF, and $3.4 million from the World Health Organisation.

Two days before the September election, the Coalition announced it would no longer commit to a timeline for Australia to contribute 0.5 per cent of its gross national income to overseas aid, which was part of Australia's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals.

As you can see, these reductions are significant—and they are not just numbers. They are about people's lives. They are about helping those in international communities who are very desperate and in a situation where they are in real need. The plea that I make today is that, given this is what is happening and it is the way that it is, there are some aid programs that surely even this government will recognise as performing well and providing real assistance that is going to make a real difference to thousands and thousands of lives. I mentioned those two programs before.

GAVI is a public-private global health partnership committed to reducing the number of children dying, by increasing immunisation access in the poorest of countries. Around seven million children die every year, mostly from preventable diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria. Two things need to be done to stop this happening: vaccinate against dangerous diseases and strengthen the capacity of local integrated health systems so they in turn might be able to manage their own disease prevention treatment systems.

GAVI works through four methods. First, it works with recipient governments to build political will for vaccines. Second, it assists the country in strengthening its health systems so it is capable of delivering immunisations and other health services. Third, it ensures funding from donor countries and sustains co-financing of vaccines by recipient countries. Fourth, it shapes the global market for vaccines to make sure there is an adequate supply of vaccines at sustainable prices for developing countries.

GAVI has immunised over half a billion children. On AusAID's multilateral scorecard in 2012 GAVI was ranked 'very strong' or 'strong' against all assessment components in the effectiveness category. GAVI has also been endorsed by the current foreign minister. On 14 February this year in a speech at the ANU she said:

I am really impressed with the change in thinking of a number of multi-lateral organisations. GAVI for example, its international finance facility for immunisation is using capital markets to create new funding for its work. The finance facility uses donor funds as collateral to issue bonds on the capital market, these bonds generate funds that are then used to finance crucial immunisation programs. That is the kind of thinking we need, get away from the old models of government handouts because ultimately our overseas aid is an investment in our region, an investment in the people, an investment in the future and we expect sold returns from that investment.
I had the privilege of travelling to Myanmar in late 2012 to see GAVI programs in action on the spot, and that is exactly what we saw. We saw good work being done. We saw people being helped. We saw capacity-building and, through that and through the nature of the financing mechanisms, we saw dollars that were donated effectively multiplying and that multiplication saving lives. So I urge the government to consider the question of Australia's commitment to GAVI in the future.

In 2011, under the then Labor government, Australia made a pledge of $200 million, which covered the next three years. However, there is a need for a further commitment now, and that commitment needs to be undertaken. I urge the government to commit an extra $75 million over 2014 and 2015 to ensure that the fantastic work of GAVI can continue.

I also mentioned the global fund, and I will speak briefly on that. The global fund does excellent work on the questions of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. To provide an example I quote again from a document regarding the work that is occurring in Papua New Guinea:

Duba, like many others, is a testimony of the TB program implementation in Papua New Guinea's Western Province.

In February 2012, five year old Duba was admitted to Daru General Hospital with an enlarged spleen and his parents were slowly losing hope that he would live. During that time the TB Program was picking up phase with the upgrading of Daru General Hospital.

A Gene X-pert machine and a digital X-ray machine were put in place by AusAID and Duba underwent Multi Drug Resistant-TB testing. He was diagnosed with MDR-TB, however, Duba's case is a primary infection meaning that his family doesn't have a TB history.

Duba commenced treatment right away and his treatment duration like any other MDR-TB case is for 2 years. Now one year and three months on, Duba is enjoying life like any other normal kid. He still has some more months to complete his treatment. We are proud of his treatment success so far and he will have a story to tell when he grows older.

The fact is that, when we look at these particular diseases, we see that 3.5 million people are killed annually by HIV-AIDS, TB or malaria. Although improvements have been made, there is a risk to our investments if these diseases are allowed to gain a foothold once again.

On 3 December 2014 Australia made a pledge of $200 million for 2014-16, and I welcome it. However, it falls roughly halfway to what is needed to maintain the growth that is required to actually conquer these diseases. The program that is in place and the aims of the global fund require that growth. They require it from a range of donor nations. Our role and the money we provide will have a multiplier effect with regard to the actions of the United States in particular but also others. Dr Mark Dybul, the fund's executive director, makes a very valid point: 'We can invest now or pay forever.'

So I urge the government to look to consider supplementing the $200 million they have provided and go to the question of $400 million, which is what is actually needed. I note that the 20th International AIDS Conference will be in Melbourne in July this year. I think it is important to send a message at such a conference that that is the commitment we make to the international community and that we recognise that there is a great need there. These programs are examples of international aid that work; they are programs which I would urge the government to get behind. They are examples of where a few more dollars in a large program budget can actually make a real difference. It is something that needs to be
considered. It is aid that will save lives. It will save lives in the region; it will save lives all around the world. I urge the government to consider these matters incredibly seriously.

Mobile Phone Towers

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (16:55): I rise today to bring to the attention of the House a great example of how one Bonner local community group has consistently rallied together to protect the local community in Wynnum and Manly. I speak of the action group No Towers Near Guardian Angels. I have stood previously in this House and spoken of the great work by this action group, and I felt compelled to highlight their work once more. They have proved time and time again that it takes only a few strong-willed and passionate people to generate an effective grassroots campaign.

The No Towers Near Guardian Angels group has been working within the community for increased transparency and accountability from telecommunications companies such as Telstra, Optus and Vodafone. For close to four years, they have worked tirelessly to ensure that the safety of the children at Guardian Angels Primary School is at the forefront of planned upgrades in the Wynnum-Manly area. It feels like groundhog day! When I first broached this topic in 2012 in the House, I brought to its attention the proposed Optus tower to be installed on the exact same site next to the Guardian Angels Primary School. I appeared before the House with a 3,500-strong petition with signatures from the wider community, and I know it was from their team effort and their show of people power that Optus decided not to go forward with installing a tower next to the Guardian Angels Primary School.

Fast forward to the present-day: the community is again rallying against infrastructure upgrades proposed by another telecommunications giant, Telstra. The telco has an existing tower on this site and has planned development upgrades for the tower. Telstra has been in consultation with the wider community of Wynnum and Manly, and the No Towers Near Guardian Angels group. Formed four years ago, this group is made up of a committed collection parents and wider community members from all walks of life. While their expertise lies in technical, corporate, political and media fields, they have all volunteered their own time and efforts to fighting this community concern. The group has engaged the Wynnum-Manly community on this project, which is evidenced by the 1,300 local signatures that I brought here with me today. This shows, again, that the local community overwhelmingly opposes infrastructure upgrades at the site.

This is an issue being experienced Australia wide. Not only do telecommunications companies need to meet increased demand, but they also need to accommodate for growth and improve the maintenance of local mobile network services for the greater community. I understand that Telstra needs to find that balance between finding an appropriate location within the Wynnum-Manly area, as it has identified the need to improve mobile services for the community. This issue is a double-edged sword. But I know, from my own personal dealings with Telstra, that it works hard to find the balance between community feedback and demand for increased mobile coverage. It is never an easy balance to achieve and it is one that I hope Telstra continues to strive for.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the No Towers Near Guardian Angels group, led by Stephen Sherrard on behalf of the local bayside community, which has worked consistently in heading up this campaign to keep Telstra accountable and to ensure that the community is aware of this issue at hand. I want to acknowledge my friend and colleague the
Minister for Communications, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, for his continued interest in this issue and for his continued support for this local community group. It is his advice and assistance behind the scenes that has been invaluable and has been greatly appreciated. I acknowledge that we must continue to ensure that balance is found between community interest and the need for telecommunications companies to deliver better services to the local community and businesses. I, along with Telstra and the No Towers Near Guardian Angels group, will continue to work together constructively. We will hold the best interests of the community's safety in mind, while we also make sure that the need for improved infrastructure in the electorate of Bonner is not forgotten.

**Gilmore Electorate: Employment**

Ms SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (17:00): Last Friday, 28 January, Gilmore was visited by the Assistant Minister for Employment, the Hon. Mr Luke Hartsuyker. In an area where our youth unemployment level is approximately 20 per cent higher than the national average and our overall unemployment is double, this was a timely visit.

The day began with a business breakfast, courtesy of one of our local business network groups. The group is a model for showing how to network, facilitate and make profits that sustain employment and generate income. There is no demand for government handouts here, just optimism and the ability to get on with the job, a focus on details, great professional standards—and let word-of-mouth advertising do the rest.

These businesses are enthusiastically waiting for the government to repeal the carbon tax, which is being prevented by the Senate. They know all too well the insidious and expensive effect this tax has had on their bottom line, reducing their potential to increase their employee numbers.

All business owners put forward comments and suggestions. One of the most important contributions was in regard to our local jobs expo. This expo has become an iconic event, showing our young people they can aspire to be more than a checkout chick or a builder's labourer. Past expos have been very successful, showing career paths that had not even been imagined let alone considered. It was explained that local families attend the jobs expo and they too begin to believe in possibilities for their children.

By 2030 the population of the Shoalhaven, which is more than half of Gilmore, is likely to have grown by 30,000 people. Local consulting groups and liaison personnel with council have emphasised that infrastructure development will be the catalyst for a more prosperous region. Based on these figures, the area would need about 26,000 new houses and 25,000 more jobs. If we get the planning right, the region will soar. There is so much potential. While the potential for the area is very bright, the current employment levels need work. And in the meantime there is a need for all our residents to feel they are part of the way forward. Most people want to contribute; often they just do not know how. Many in the community believe that participating in volunteering is a way to get valuable work experience in preparation for a job.

I quote from a young woman reported in our local paper. She believes ‘a lot of the responsibility is with the jobseekers, that doing volunteer work to gain skills would help, and getting experience is the main thing’. We truly believe that all Australians can participate in work of some description, either for a wage or for their community. The concept of Work for
the Dole was discussed with business leaders during the breakfast meeting, and at the Bay and Basin Community Resource Centre.

Work for the Dole in Gilmore was a very successful way to help jobseekers improve their employment prospects in practical ways, to help them gain the skills and experience they need to move from welfare to work. At the same time, participants made a positive contribution to our local community by working on local projects. The business leaders were very enthusiastic in their endorsement of the success of the previous programs.

We then went to the Bay and Basin Community Resource Centre, and the minister was given firsthand advice on how well the program had worked in many different villages, from Sanctuary Point right down to Ulladulla in the south. Programs included working with the Men's Sheds, local park care groups, home maintenance for the elderly, woodwork projects, training and participating in community radio, and learning to make toys which were later donated to charity groups for Christmas. The list of projects was so varied and effective.

Sue Clifton, Deb Taylor and Brad Slaughter, along with all the amazing staff and volunteers, helped 70 per cent of their Work for the Dole participants feel confident and secure enough to actually gain employment. Of course it was not easy. Many had not been working for some time and had trouble sticking to the daily schedule; but, as the participants settled into behaviour patterns, they developed a sense of achievement and an attitude of 'I can do this'; making toys, creating pathways in scrubby riverside vegetation and bike tracks for children or building games tables for older people living in aged-care residences.

Of course the other side of the employment problem is how to formally engage people in the process of applying for jobs, getting ready for interviews and being assisted wherever possible, either by personal mentoring or by employment and training incentives. The forum with the job providers was very informative, letting the minister know the problems that had been provided to me over the last five months. There are so many aspects to this area. It is a little like a minefield. But the experience and expertise contributed by the attendees was seriously fantastic.

We had job providers, job trainers, NEIS coordinators, school counsellors, Indigenous employment agencies, disability support agencies, mental health support personnel, partnership brokers and RTO representatives at the forum. The breadth of their insights enabled a frank and constructive discussion. Red tape in this area has become a nightmare. Providers are spending about 70 per cent of their time completing compliance paperwork, compared to about 40 per cent seven years ago, when, really, their time should be spent working with businesses to find jobs for their clients. There are discrepancies now for placements and subsidies from different providers, causing unnecessary competition and questions as to the effectiveness of the subsidies.

The apprenticeship wage structure introduced by the last government has had a significant impact on employment opportunities for the older apprentice. Bill Elliot—not his real name—told me his problem. He is 21 years old and he has been working in an electrical wholesale shop for just over a year. He decided to apply for an apprenticeship but the structure introduced by the last government has made him uncompetitive in the workplace. He is just as expensive to employ as a third-year electrical apprentice. There is absolutely no advantage to his employer to take him on, despite his extensive experience and a better work ethic than the average 16-year-old who applies for the same apprenticeship position. In fact, because he is
an adult apprentice, he is now entitled to 80 per cent of a fully qualified electrician's wage. He is still not going to be employed, and we are still going to have a shortage in this area of need. He understands why the change took place; but, in the end, he will not get his apprenticeship. The problem for regional areas is made so much worse because of this ill-thought-out problem. It is a sad indictment of unintended consequences by policy development on the hop—badly thought out and badly implemented.

Many other red-tape issues were presented. If an apprentice needs to extend the time to complete, the small-business owner has to take on the paperwork responsibility. This is onerous and leads to loss of productivity. If there is a child support debt, the employer has to complete all the paperwork—hardly conducive to potential employment. Many employers do not require a subsidy to take on an employee; they just want someone who will do the job. Why do we need to wait until someone is unemployed for more than six months before they can be assisted to find work?

The whole balance of service provision, outcomes based payment and the way different service providers could work together needs a complete overhaul in making sure that the new funding model considers specialist job seekers and helps those with a mental illness and youths at risk. Trying to get people into work is often met with comments from employers such as: 'We can't hire one. There's just too much red tape to go with it. I don't hire people with disabilities.' This is despite the fact that one in five people actually do have a disability and are probably already employed. The truth is that very often a person with a disability has fewer sick days and is more reliable. As an employer in a family manufacturing business before politics, I can absolutely agree with this statement, having employed Christine, a profoundly deaf girl, for many years, and also Felicity—both were wonderful.

It is absolutely clear that the government has a mess to clean up. In terms of administrative processes and a reduction of business red-tape quicksand, such a clean-up can only be done by a government that actually knows the impact of policy change on business and the bottom line. This is so very important for business growth and stability, ultimately leading to employment opportunities.

In Gilmore it is critical that we retain the very successful local programs of training and youth initiatives with the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service and surf lifesaving that have led to a more than 50 per cent increase in volunteer numbers and participation rates. We must work hard to keep the very successful Partnership Brokers Program, which has enabled disconnected youth to enter work and learn strategies that have led to employment positions. In Gilmore, we have extensive unemployment levels and a complexity of employment inhibitors. Successful programs such as these and the NEIS need to be retained. Without them and an effective and well-considered equivalent of a Work for the Dole strategy unemployment will only get worse.

Our local businesses, our Work for the Dole ready community groups and our job provider services all appreciated the chance to meet the Assistant Minister for Employment, Luke Hartsuyker, to communicate their views, to hear about developing policies and to put their suggestions forward. They addressed so many issues in Gilmore, including our dreadful regional unemployment levels. I thank all the participants for their considered, passionate responses in the forums and discussions.
Sydney Airport

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (17:09): I know it is a grievance debate, Deputy Speaker, but I wanted to let the member for Gilmore know, through you, that I had a great steak sandwich at a small business in her electorate a few weekends ago. It was at the Little Blowhole Cafe—I have now endorsed them in Hansard. They are a very good small business, and I was very happy to be there.

Grievance debates are an opportunity for us to raise issues critical to the people we represent. Today, I would like to take advantage of the opportunity extended to me as an MP to put forward some balance in an amazingly one-sided debate that is occurring in Sydney right now about Sydney's second airport. If you are a Western Sydney resident, or an MP for that matter, and you want to outline your concerns on the impact of an airport in Western Sydney: good luck! You are given literally no opportunity to air your views. The Daily Telegraph, for example, has taken a particular stand in favour of the Western Sydney airport. I have no issue with that—it is their paper and it is their prerogative. But as a reader, you should be entitled to hear the other side of the debate. Given that The Tele is in favour of rough-and-tumble debate—as I am—you would think that you would be able to have both sides canvassed by the paper. If you are Ned Manoun, or Chris Brown, or David Borger, you will get a chance to sing from the pro-Badgerys Creek song sheet with one eye shut. I have no issue with that. But you do not get much space if you want to argue the other side. Now, I am not using a grievance debate to pitch an idea to editor Paul Whittaker that I become an op-ed writer—although if he wants me to become a cadet journalist, I would be happy to consider it as long as I am not reporting to Joe Hildebrand! But I certainly hope that we will have some back and forth on this issue. Western Sydney residents deserve to hear both sides of the debate, so that they can make an informed decision on a matter that will have a significant impact on them.

There are some issues that have to be considered very carefully. I would like to outline some of these in my contribution to the chamber now. First, this will represent a massive investment from both federal and state governments. They will need to fork out the money, particularly for all the infrastructure. This is not just about rolling out a tarmac in Western Sydney; there will be a phenomenal amount of money required to connect road and rail infrastructure and to integrate that into the existing infrastructure in Western Sydney. This is an area with a population of 1.5 to 2 million people, who grapple every day with congestion, and who are trying to get from one side of the city to the other—the commute into Sydney is a big issue for them. We need to make sure that they are not also forced to compete with passenger traffic that comes from the air onto land.

The federal government reckons they have all this money—which is surprising, because every time you listen to them, they tell you that it is not there. For instance—to put this in perspective—in December, in my area the federal government cut $6 million for critical health care investment at my local hospital at Mount Druitt, including for an MRI scanner that we have long campaigned for. We cannot get health funding to help detect cancers in local residents—but this government reckons that it is going to have billions of dollars available to spend on this airport. Another example is that the coalition have just announced—or they did announce through the course of the campaign, and when they got into office—that they would fund WestConnex. I have no issue with that. I think it is good to be able to extend the M4. But
the fact of the matter is that the money that has been put forward, combined with state money, will be combined with a toll. So they do not have the money to fund this fully; they will have to co-fund it—with a toll that will see tolls reapplied on old roads that have already been paid for! We are also told that if the money does not exist to fund WestConnex without a toll, we will apparently still have funds for a multibillion-dollar airport in Sydney's west.

The New South Wales government is embarking on a slow crab-walk away from its position of opposition to the airport. You can tell that they are being pressured by MPs to support the airport. We saw that on the weekend. They are being urged to support an airport that Infrastructure New South Wales would not even list as an infrastructure priority in its plans. It has a whole stack of other things in there, but apparently the New South Wales government is being urged to fund this one. In my area, the New South Wales government will need to fund billions in road and rail links.

You cannot get the New South Wales government to fund the installation of lifts at local railway stations in my area—and they have been called for at Rooty Hill and Doonside. You cannot get the money for that but, again, they will somehow find the money to fund the billions of dollars for rail links and billions of dollars for road links. And this from a government that also cut the cardiac unit. It does not have the money to fund the cardiac unit that existed at Mt Druitt hospital and which is now being shut. We will now get a methadone clinic put in its place in our hospital as a result of the urging of some of the same MPs who are pushing for an airport. We cannot get the money for that, but they can find money for an airport.

If you ask Western Sydney residents about their infrastructure priorities they will not tell you that an airport is one of them. They will want better roads, they will want better schools, they will want better hospitals, but they will not—even after you have asked them to think about it long enough—come up with the airport, because if Infrastructure New South Wales will not fund it, Western Sydney residents certainly will not support it.

We are going to invest all this money because apparently Sydney airport is full. Sydney airport recently brought out a master plan, and that has been disparaged by the Deputy Prime Minister and other figures as well. This master plan that would help manage growth in coming decades has been disparaged by people who probably have no experience of air traffic numbers other than maybe an experience of a delay in getting their luggage after a long-haul flight—and, based on that, they then can say, 'Sydney airport is full.'

If money is tight and you cannot attend to the basic infrastructure needs of Western Sydney, why are we even contemplating a mammoth investment in a possible Western Sydney airport that will span probably the best part of a decade but not look into two things, two government imposed controls, that choke the efficiency of Sydney airport? We are told that economic growth and productivity are being held back by congestion-caused delays at Sydney airport. If that is so, why is there no Productivity Commission review into, for example, the impact of the curfew at Sydney airport or, more importantly, the impact on movement caps that are imposed on an hourly basis on Sydney airport?

I certainly know that communities around the inner city would be upset with what I am putting forward, and I respect that. But bear in mind that not only is Western Sydney being told by the advocates of this new airport that they should get a second airport in one of the fastest-growing regions in the country but also they have argued that a curfew which protects
inner-city residents should not apply to Badgerys Creek. The claim is that no-one lives around the site. It is the fastest-growing region in the country. Badgerys Creek will sit like an appendage on top of the south-west growth centre and be home to 300,000 people, and we are being told that that can survive without the curfew. That is just ridiculous. So Western Sydney has been told to live with a 24-hour airport but there has been no review of the existing curfew arrangement at Sydney airport where airlines, if they do breach these curfews, are punished to the tune of $850,000.

What kind of airport will it be? We have no detail. The coalition candidates during the election said that there were absolutely no plans for a second airport at Badgerys Creek. That was stated from the Prime Minister down, and there were candidates in our area saying that also. They said that they do not have any plans. But the PM has brought together Liberal MPs to talk about it. They have set up a new committee that is now going to meet with the Prime Minister to talk about an airport that they have absolutely no plans for! It is outrageous that an airport that has that kind of impact on Western Sydney is represented by only one side of politics and that not all sides of politics will be representing the residents of Western Sydney.

Finally, if you listen to the advocates of this airport, like the Sydney Business Chamber, who funded a Deloitte study into the impact of the airport, they claim that 30,000 jobs will be created. This represents about 30 million movements or an airport roughly the size of Brisbane in Sydney's west. Recently they have upped that. They have gone from 30,000 to 60,000 jobs being created by this airport, which would make it an airport as big as, if not bigger than, Heathrow! Let us put some perspective on this. Sydney airport creates not 60,000 jobs but 28,000, so there is a proposed airport about as big as Sydney airport being put in this region.

I think it is important that the people have the facts. I agree that it should not be a scare campaign. It should be clear-eyed, it should have the facts and people should make their minds up. But we should not have a one-sided debate that disrespects Western Sydney insofar as it is not treating the residents there with the due care. A plan for an airport of this size should be able to have all those facts in place before a final decision is made. As John Howard said in 2003, another airport did not need to ever be built in Sydney.

**Human Rights: Burma, Uganda and the Middle East**

*Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (17:19):* I would like to take this opportunity of the grievance debate to raise a number of issues of concern. The first is the tragic and desperate situation of the Rohingya in Burma, described variously as the most unwanted, the least loved and the most persecuted people in the world. I thank Dr Hla Myint and the Rohingya Intellectuals Community in Australia for their advocacy. The dramatic civil and political transformation of Burma has continued apace, with the army leadership becoming politicians, Aung San Suu Kyi and the opposition entering parliament, hundreds of political prisoners being freed and Western sanctions being lifted, with the consequent opening up of markets and tourism. It has seemed as though Burma is fast leaving its horrific past behind.

Unfortunately, this is not the case for the approximately one million Rohingya, a largely Muslim ethnic minority, who live in the impoverished western state of Rakhine, or Arakan. Despite most Rohingyas having lived in Burma for generations, they are not regarded as legitimate inhabitants by the Burmese majority, who see them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Indeed, the Rohingya were specifically excluded as citizens in the 1982
citizenship act. In 2012 at least 200 people were killed in clashes between the Buddhist Rakhine and Rohingya Muslim communities. Tens of thousands of Rohingyas remain displaced, many in squalid and inhumane camps where there is a lack of safe drinking water, limited healthcare services, chronic malnutrition and restrictions on movement outside the camps. A November 2012 article in *The Economist* reported a 'vicious and bloody campaign of ethnic cleansing by the Rakhine that is intended to drive Rohingyas out. Rakhine politicians say frankly that the only alternative to mass deportation is a Burmese form of apartheid'.

In April 2013, Human Rights Watch released a report entitled *All you can do is pray: crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan state* which describes the role of the Burmese government and local authorities in the forcible displacement of more than 125,000 Rohingyas and the ongoing humanitarian crisis. The report found that the Burmese government is systematically restricting humanitarian aid.

In October 2013, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Burma tabled a report at the UN General Assembly noting that hate speech was leading to intercommunal violence in Arakan. The special rapporteur found that Arakan was in a state of 'profound crisis' and that few steps had been taken to contain the violence, with the government failing to properly investigate allegations dating from June 2012 in relation to extrajudicial killings, rape and sexual violence, arbitrary detention—often involving torture and ill treatment in addition to deaths—and the denial of due process and fair trial rights.

Frequent incidents of violence against Rohingyas have occurred since 2012. In January this year, 48 Rohingyas men, women and children were killed, along with a Buddhist policeman, in Du Chee Yar Tan village in the remote northern part of the state. The government has only acknowledged the death of the Buddhist policeman. Medecins Sans Frontieres reported that they had treated 22 patients who had been injured in the incident. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay called on the authorities to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation and to ensure that victims and their families received justice. Ms Pillay noted:

By responding to these incidents quickly … the Government has an opportunity to show transparency and accountability, which will strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Myanmar.

Unfortunately, rather than take this opportunity, last week the government has instead ordered Medecins Sans Frontieres, which has operated in Burma for more than two decades, to halt its Burmese operations. Tim Robertson, writing for newmatilda.com on 14 February this year, noted

No public figure will dare criticise what is becoming an active campaign of ethnic cleansing for fear of what it will mean for his or her popularity.

The one person, almost universally respected and loved, who could help put an end to the murder, rape, torture and marginalisation of Burma's Muslim minority is Nobel Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi. She has by far the most popular influence in Burmese politics, but rather than speak out against the violence, she has made vague comments that tacitly endorse the government’s deliberate inaction on this crisis. What hope do the Rohingyas have if Burma's best-known "peace activist" won't speak out?

Emanuel Stoakes, a freelance journalist writing for Al Jazeera, refers to experts including Professor William Schabas, the former president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, who have judged the Rohingyas to be at risk of genocide. Stoakes asked whether 'Myanmar's new international friends have the courage to call for a full investigation by the UN before more monstrous crimes and vapid denials come to pass'. Last year US President
Barack Obama warned President Thein Sein that the campaign of violence against Muslims must stop. In June last year then Australian foreign minister Bob Carr offered $9 million to help the Rohingya and called for efforts to resolve the underlying causes of the unrest in Rakhine state. While those statements are welcome, it is apparent that significantly more pressure must be brought to bear by the international community, including through an international and impartial investigation into the events in Rakhine state and, inter alia, the potential reimposition of sanctions in the absence of any indication from the Burmese government that the rights of the Rohingya will be respected.

The second issue I want to address in this grievance debate is the harsh legislation introduced in Uganda that contains a maximum penalty of life imprisonment for homosexuality.

The new law also makes it a criminal offence to not report people suspected of being gay. The law's sponsor, Ugandan MP David Bahati, had included the death penalty in the original bill introduced in 2009. Ugandan Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity at that time, James Buturo, told Reuters that the government had reconsidered this and thought: 'a life sentence could be better because it gives room for offenders to be rehabilitated. Killing them might not be helpful.' The anti-gay law has led to one tabloid, Red Pepper, last week naming Uganda's 'top 200 gays'. Three years ago, similar reporting in Uganda of names and images of people alleged to be gay led to the brutal murder in January 2011 of Uganda's most prominent gay activist, David Kato. I note the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, has called this a 'tragic day for Uganda and for all who care about the cause of human rights'. The World Bank has postponed a $90 million loan as a result of the law's passage but, thus far, the Ugandan government has responded with defiance, saying it 'showed Uganda's independence in the face of Western pressure and provocation'. As also noted in The Economist this week, local media have made anti-gay sentiment synonymous with patriotism. According to Amnesty International, homosexuality is illegal in 38 of 54 African countries. Homosexual acts can be punished by death sentences in Mauritania, Southern Somalia, Sudan and Northern Nigeria. It is to be hoped that this shocking and unacceptable state of affairs, as epitomised by the latest new law in Uganda, can be addressed, reversed and ultimately dismantled.

Finally, I wish to speak in this grievance debate on the issue of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Last week, my colleague the member for Calwell made an eloquent speech commemorating 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, as declared by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 16 January. As someone who has worked and lived in Palestine, and as someone who believes in the international rule of law, I share the member for Calwell's concern about statements by the foreign minister to the media suggesting that Israeli settlements in the West Bank may not be illegal under international law. As I noted in a speech in this place in December last year, this view is overwhelmingly contradicted by the international community including the International Court of Justice, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva conventions. Dr Ben Saul, Professor of International Law at Sydney University, writing in The Conversation on 24 January noted that the Israeli settlements constitute a war crime under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, both of which Australia is a party to. Even Israel's closest ally, the United States, regards the settlements as
illegitimate, while closer to home some of our near neighbours, including Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Malaysia, see this as a matter of great injustice.

The use of the term ‘settlements’ belies the true nature of these urban aggregations as permanent cities. These cities consume most of the precious water in an arid region. They are surrounded by large buffer zones and accessed by Israeli-only highways, all guarded by Israeli defence force soldiers, thus expanding the total land area effectively confiscated from the Palestinians. As acknowledged by one of the settlers featured on the Four Corners program entitled 'Stone Cold Justice' which aired on 10 February this year, the deliberate creation by Israel of so-called facts on the ground through settlement building is for the purpose of rendering a future Palestinian state physically impossible. In that program, Daniella Weiss said: 'With our many talks with Ariel Sharon, and with my work with Ariel Sharon, there was a clear understanding—a very clear planning of spreading the communities, the Jewish communities, in the way that there will be no option for a Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria.' This planning is evident in the mushrooming of settlements throughout the West Bank and in their strategic placement that divides sections of the West Bank from one another. This is the truth behind the settlements—and the reason they are so categorically rejected under international law. It is essential that Australia not undermine either the established international rule of law in this area or the consensus on a two-state solution, particularly at a time when Australia has the presidency of both the UN Security Council and the G20.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity during this grievance debate to address three matters of international human rights significance. Each represents an example of humankind's capacity to visit cruelty, ignorance and intolerance upon itself, because when any of us fail to respect basic human rights, we feed a cancer that can arise anywhere, anytime, with terrible consequences for human safety, liberty and wellbeing. Australia has a role to play in applying its influence and advocacy against human rights violations, wherever they occur, and in seeking greater influence and effectiveness in that cause.

Doctor Shortage in Rural and Regional Australia

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (17:29): I rise today to talk about a couple of issues. First I will like to talk about the doctor shortage in rural and regional Australia, particularly in my seat of Flynn. For some reason—and several reasons have been put forward—doctors generally find it hard to come to rural areas, whether it be their families, education reasons or updating their training needs.

However, I welcome the current review, which is being undertaken into the determination of these areas as districts of workforce shortage, commonly called DWS. In the case of Boyne Island and Tannum Sands, which are fast-growing areas south of Gladstone, doctors are constantly leaving. It is almost impossible to attract new doctors to this area. I must admit that is a very nice place to live, but you have got to convince the doctors from the cities to come to these rural areas and they are not classified as DWS areas.

Many of the fly-in, fly-out workers on Curtis Island just outside Gladstone use the services of doctors in these areas, but at present they are not taken into account when assessing the area as they do not live there and come in from outside. However, there is a need for extra services to look after these workers. This is not currently being looked at in the data for DWS calculations, and that is a real problem.
In other areas you just cannot get doctors. I find that, where there is one doctor in a country town, they generally have that much work that they cannot physically cope with the one-doctor-town philosophy. It just does not work. In Emerald, Biloela and Theodore we are so lucky to have longstanding doctors who have served the people for the last 40 to 50 years. Even though these doctors are getting close to retirement, they cannot leave because there is no-one to take their places. We definitely need new blood. But we do not need one doctor; we need at least two doctors in each town so their workload can be spread across two doctors and alleviate the pressure on their families. The doctors have wives, husbands and kids. They want to see their kids grow up, but in their hectic lives as rural doctors they find it very difficult.

In Theodore on Friday, I helped open a new medical centre which was badly damaged in the 2010 floods. It was great to see something good come out of the floods. They have a new doctor's surgery, and the people of Theodore were very happy with the end result. It took a lot of money from the federal government, from the state government and from the local community, who did its own fundraising to get the medical centre open. All are happy, I am pleased to report.

On the other side of the fence, on Friday as I went around the Flynn electorate, and, in Banana—and I think you could say this for the rest of Flynn and Central Queensland—there is a lot of economic uncertainty amongst the people. I want to impress on the House that it is not only the car industry and the Qantas workers and the fruit growers in the Murrumbidgee or the Murray; I think a lot of people out there are suffering and finding it very hard to make ends meet.

The economy has slowed, and it continues to slow. In my area, we export a lot to Asia. We are watching the growth of China to see which way it goes. At the moment it is not looking all that good. It is coming off a high—it is still bubbling along okay, but it is slower. So we are watching China with bated breath, but business confidence in drought-stricken areas is very, very low. We put out a package last week through the agriculture minister, Mr Barnaby Joyce. It was a good package, but it was aimed only at graziers whose properties are drought-stricken. All the towns in western Central Queensland rely heavily on the beef industry, and, when the beef industry goes down, they go down also.

In Australia it is either floods or droughts, and I know that we cannot help everyone. But it is almost unnecessary to say that people out there in the bush are doing it very tough at the moment. Their confidence is down. There is no product for them to sell. There is no business for them to do. We have to do something. Hopefully, the rain will come. But, of course, if it does come, it will take at least 18 months for the farmers to get a return and some cash circulating in their bank accounts. The banks are finding it tough to deal with. There are people out there who do not have any stock to replenish their herds, because their breeders have gone. In a lot of cases they face a sad situation. Some graziers have been told by the banks that there will be no money for re-stocking once the drought breaks.

The LNG in Gladstone is booming along pretty well: there is $60 billion worth of expansion in the gas industry. There are three main plants on Curtis Island, but the construction work on them will wind down within the next nine months, and after that the production phase will start. This means that 11½ thousand people currently working in Gladstone will be looking for work. In the meantime the three companies which own the
plants will hire about 200 personnel to work in each plant—so 600 jobs will be created there—and a full-time maintenance crew for the three plants of about another 200 will also be hired. In other words, 11½ thousand jobs will be replaced by about 1,000 jobs required for the gas industry.

The gas industry is in a ticklish situation. We have contracts with the Asian market—China, Korea and Japan—for about $14 a petajoule. The American gas price is currently about $2 to $3 a petajoule, and it will be very interesting to see what happens with the shale oil gas market. If the Americans decide to go into the Asian market, although we have already signed contacts with the companies I just mentioned, it could be, to say the least, a bit touchy. The only advantages that Central Queensland has is that the pipelines have been built and that they are much closer to the seaboard than America's, which are a long way from the seaboard and further from the markets of China and Korea.

The new companies have spent $60 billion, and we would like to see them start production as soon as possible so that they can get on and, hopefully, get a return on their investments. Gas appears to be getting out of whack in price compared to the situation in the past, and I can see people who went from coal to gas going back to coal from gas in the future. In fact this has already happened in Swanbank, which was gas-fired. They have now shut their plant down and made it into a coal fired power station again.

There are three power stations in my electorate. There is the NRG Gladstone power station, which is the biggest operating power station in Queensland and which gets us coal from the Callide mine in Biloela. There is Stanwell. Then there is Callide itself. I can see a long-term future for these three power stations. But the price of electricity is still a big issue, and abolition of the carbon tax will go a long way towards making our power cheaper, which is what industry needs.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Porter): There being no further grievances, this debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 192B. The debate is adjourned, and resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 17:40